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***Deference and Disdain: Domestic Service in Post-Apartheid South
Africa***

by

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***A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology***



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May 2001

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have been involved in the thesis. My supervisor Prof. Robin Cohen who was unstinting in both sharing his time and his knowledge, for which I am most grateful. Dr Parita Mukta for her contribution, particularly in the area of drawing my attention to pertinent literature. Prof. Jim Beckford for a comprehensive doctoral training programme. Witwatersrand and Rhodes Universities for their co-operation in facilitating the fieldwork. Prof. Jackie Cock (Witwatersrand) provided insights into her original research, which have proven invaluable. I would also like to take the opportunity to recognise her courage and dedication to her profession in conducting this research. Prof. Cock spoke out during the apartheid years when it would have been easier to stay silent. Prof. Roger Southall (Rhodes) opened his home to me. His hospitality was much appreciated.

I owe a great debt to all the friends I made whilst over in South Africa who gave of their time to help. Particularly, I would like to thank Eddie and his wife who acted as my drivers and interpreters. Mavis, who as a long time resident of Grahamstown offered her services in arranging interviews in the white community. To all my interviewees, I am sincerely grateful. Their openness and willingness to speak has made this thesis possible. As I visited the townships, it was an opportunity to step into the lives of some remarkable women, which profoundly touched me. Finally, my husband Bob and children who have all been so supportive throughout and have given of themselves to assist me in reaching completion. Thank-you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to discover if the dismantling of apartheid had ameliorated the poor pay and conditions of domestic servants in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. I situated these workers in the wider societal context in order to examine their 'quality of life' in addition to their 'quality of work'. Universal features of domestic service have been the depersonalising of the worker and the denial of their adulthood to that of a child. Enriching the data with consideration of some of the life details of the domestic servants interviewed challenges these lingering social practices. I favoured an interpretive methodology in order to give my interviewees the opportunity to 'speak for themselves' and facilitate the exploration of the hidden meanings within the domestic service relationship. Having argued through the thesis that domestic servants are often socially constructed, caricatured and 'trapped' into being the 'other', their words are a reaffirmation of their adult status. Hegel's Lordship/bondage paradigm was the starting point of the theoretical analysis, from which I developed my own 'chains of otherness' conception. I sacrificed representativeness in my sample in order to focus on contextualising my theoretical arguments in nine diverse case studies. The outcome was that my research question narrowed to considering improvements in the lives of my nine domestic workers interviewed. However, I have also incorporated quantitative data within the thesis to add depth to my investigation.

Grahamstown was the deliberate choice for the research site, as this was also the site of Cock's (1989/79) much-cited *Maids and Madams*. To return to an original area of investigation was imperative, as within the remit of the research question being asked was a comparison of domestic service during and after apartheid. The distortions of regionalism were minimalised and validated my use of Cock's results as a starting point for my own findings. Mandela's book title *Long Walk to Freedom* is an apt description of what I discovered. Improvements are beginning to be made but there is still much more to be achieved. Domestic service's inclusion in the ambit of labour legislation and improved conditions of work are positive shifts, but wages are still extremely low and social practices still have racial orientations. In addition to the application of my theoretical arguments, I moved beyond answering the original research question to consider the effects of poverty in the lives of domestic workers and formulated strategies of empowerment. As the thesis has favoured a qualitative approach I not only considered the material factors that are necessary to empower, but also the interrelations between one another that can recognise and promote human dignity.

ABBREVIATIONS

African National Congress	(ANC)
Basic Conditions of Employment Act	(BCEA)
University of Cape Town	(UCT)
Congress of South African Trade Unions	(COSATU)
Grahamstown Area District Relief Association	(GADRA)
Growth, Employment and Redistribution	(GEAR)
Labour Relations Act	(LRA)
Port Elizabeth	(PE)
Poverty and Inequality Report	(PIR)
Reconstruction and Development Programme	(RDP)
South African Congress of Trade Unions	(SACTU)
South African Communist Party	(SACP)
South African Domestic Workers' Union	(SADWU)
Transaction Analysis	(TA)

INTRODUCTION

To raise our country and its people from the morass of racism and apartheid will require determination and effort [...] We place our vision of a new constitutional order for South Africa on the table not as conquerors, prescribing to the conquered. We speak as fellow citizens to heal the wounds of the past with the intent of constructing a new order based on justice for all. This is the challenge that faces all South Africans today, and it is one to which I am certain we will all rise.

Nelson Mandela, Cape Town, 9 May 1994.

The thesis is presented in eight chapters, a number of which will reflect the centrality of the qualitative empirical research. The Introduction will set out the purpose of the research and put forward the rationale of why domestic service was chosen as the vehicle to ascertain if the ending of apartheid has ameliorated the conditions of work for black South African women. Although the formal structures of racism have been dismantled with the ending of apartheid, it cannot be assumed that this act alone will have lifted the country from the ‘morass of racism’. The ideologies that underpin racism may well still be in force but in the political climate of ‘truth and reconciliation’; the fear of social censure may inhibit the expression of racial prejudices. S. Cohen (2000: 132) implicitly recognises this when he states:

South Africans are particularly cynical about the apparent ease with which some of the worst perpetrators have adopted the rhetoric of the ‘new South Africa’, as if the past never existed. It now appears that nobody, not even civil servants and politicians, ever believed in apartheid.

Therefore, the meanings of the domestic service relationship will be explored in the thesis. These will be briefly presented in the Introduction and then explored in more detail in the Literature Review chapter.

The methodology of the research will also be presented in the Introduction. The

conducted primarily in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, supported by a short pilot study in Johannesburg. I returned to South Africa in May 2000 to consolidate the initial research. Grahamstown is the site of Cock's much cited 1979 work, *Maids and Madams* and the reasons for replicating her site and some of her research techniques are explained in the methodology. My research raised specific empirical and theoretical challenges and the Introduction will conclude by discussing the ramifications of these difficulties and how they were resolved.

The Literature Review chapter will consider racism as a topic in itself. This is a departure from Cock's research, as she addressed the issue of racism through the mechanism of apartheid and within the parameters of feminist theorising. Like Cock, I will explore feminist and Marxist arguments in relation to domestic service. The major departure from Cock's research is in the level of theoretical analysis I introduce in this chapter. In her analysis, racism was so overt that the meanings of the domestic service relationship were less significant than the blatant racial abuses. I prioritise the meanings of the domestic service relationship and develop this further into my own conception of 'chains of otherness'. The analysis of the research data also reflects the emphasis I give to the more subtle nuances of the domestic service relationship. The result is that the methodology is qualitative and therefore the review of the literature is another site to justify the choice of methodology.

The possible danger of an interpretive approach is focusing exclusively on the interpersonal relationship between the employer and her servant. To redress this, I have incorporated a chapter in the thesis, which will consider domestic service both in a comparative and global context. This chapter will implicitly critique Cock's comparative analysis. She centred her comparison on Victorian England, which in

itself is reflective of the isolationist position of South Africa during its apartheid history. To clarify the point, South Africa is only one of many other African countries with a long tradition of employing servants, yet their domestic employment experiences were not examined in her comparative analysis. The outcome of historical comparison is that we are able to see the perpetuation and endurance of certain features of the domestic service relationship, but we are not able to ascertain whether the features are universal in nature. Seeing common patterns across national boundaries is a great aid in recognising and understanding the impact of wider societal forces on the domestic service relationship.

The vulnerability of servants is not totally determined by their personal relationship with employers. Such things as unemployment ratios, educational achievements, familial arrangements, labour legislation in respect of domestic service all have relevance to the power differential between employer and servant. I have therefore also incorporated a Political Economy chapter in the thesis to explore these wider societal implications. Some of the criticisms of employers that were raised by domestic workers interviewed in Cock's study will also be addressed in this chapter.

Our employers should be told how important we are.

We should be counted as people.

Our employers should take us as people not as animals.

If they knew these things perhaps they would give us better pay (Cock, 1989/79: 89).

The aim is by situating domestic workers within the wider social context that this will enable them to be seen as real women with the hopes, aspirations, problems and worries that beset us all. The desired outcome is one, which will enable us to perceive

these women as more than the ciphers to the demands and requirements of their employers.

The next three chapters will present the fieldwork and analyse the findings. I have deliberately, within the presentation of my fieldwork, allotted space for the women I interviewed to 'speak for themselves'. The author Alice Walker (1992: 275) expresses similar sentiments in the American context:

When we look back over our history, it is clear we have neglected to save just those people who could help us most. Because no matter what anyone says, it is the black woman's words that have the most meaning for us, her daughters, because she [...] has experienced life not only as a black person, but as a woman.

I do not neglect the fact that I also interviewed white female employers, but I would argue that they too have the right for their voices to be heard. Wahrman (1995: 8) has asserted that there is a space between social reality and how the social actors represent that reality. He concludes that the dominant hegemony of the time will result in one particular representation being assumed the reality. Giving a forum to only one voice, irrespective of whether that voice is black or white, will inevitably result in an usurping of the space between social reality and representation by the speaker. Listening to many voices in the thesis will ensure that the space is minimalised for the reader.

The concluding chapter of the thesis will draw the empirical and theoretical findings together to ascertain whether the dismantling of apartheid has improved the working lives of black domestic workers in the context of the case studies chosen. Pay and conditions are the obvious barometers and will clearly be examined. However, I am mindful of Thompson's (1968: 230-231) remarks from his classic text, *The Making of the English Working Class*, which implicitly argues that there is more to be

considered. He makes the distinction between ‘standard-of-life’ and ‘way-of-life’, the first relating to a measurement of quantities, the second a description of qualities.

He states,

A major source of confusion arises from the drawing of conclusions as to one from evidence appropriate only to the other. It is at times as if statisticians have been arguing: “the indices reveal an increased per capita consumption of tea, sugar, meat and soap, therefore the working class was happier”, while social historians have replied: “literary sources show that people were unhappy, therefore their standard of living must have deteriorated”. [...] It is quite possible for statistical averages and human experiences to run in opposite directions.

Pay and conditions are in Thompson’s category of ‘standard-of-life’ and will be insufficient by themselves to fully answer the question of improvements. The ‘way of life’ criteria also has to be incorporated into the analysis. This will be addressed by including the personal viewpoints of the interviewees into the evaluation. To clarify the point, I have interpreted Thompson’s notion of quantities and qualities as objective and subjective data and therefore in the conclusion will draw them both together to answer the research question.

(i) Research Purpose:

The central question of the research is to establish if the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa has improved the lives of black domestic workers. The reasons for situating the exploration of the ending of apartheid in the domestic service context are twofold. Firstly, researchers such as Rollins (1985) have argued that domestic service is one of the most exploitative of all labour relationships. One of the reasons given for such an assertion is that this type of labour involves ‘emotional labour’ (see Hochschild, 1983), where employees are expected to give more than simple physical acts of service. Employees’ manner, dress, and deference are integral parts of the employer and servant relationship. For example, when Rollins covertly sought

employment as a domestic worker to obtain data for her research, she had to alter her own demeanour and dress in order to obtain a position of employment:

Part of being a domestic was acting like the person the employer wanted the domestic to be. The better this performance, the greater the probability of the domestic receiving more than the minimum in material and emotional rewards (Rollins, 1985: 147).

Exploitation in domestic service is further compounded by the fact that it takes place behind 'closed doors'. A fear of social censure is not so much an issue in this sphere as it is in the public sphere, as outsiders do not easily monitor actions. Domestic service justifiably can be considered as an example of employment in the extremities of both the political and social systems of a country. Examining the dismantling of apartheid in this context may well offer some indication of the progress of the South African government in eliminating the legacy of apartheid. Because of the marginalised position of domestic service, evidence of improvements in this sector of employment would therefore be an encouraging sign of improvements in the working conditions of black South African women more generally.

Secondly, Cock argued in her widely cited 1979 study of domestic service in the Eastern Cape, that this employment relationship was a 'microcosm' of the apartheid societal structure. She states:

Domestic workers and their employers are not free and equal participants in interaction. Their interaction is shaped and coloured by the structures which control the distribution of power and resources in South African society (Cock, 1989/1979: 4).

As the structures of apartheid are no longer politically enforced any evidence I discovered of similar patterns of behaviour in the domestic service relationship to those of Cock's would be indicative that the social practices of apartheid have not been completely erased. This second reason is put forward with certain reservations which are based on Cock's own initial assertion of domestic service being reflective

of wider societal structures. It can be argued that irrespective of a political system, this type of employment relationship by its very nature will be exploitative. Racism is only one of the underpinning constituents of South African domestic service, class and gender inequalities are also key factors. It therefore could be concluded that if I found no improvements in the lives of domestic servants that this is not in itself evidence that the social practices of apartheid were still in force. For example, class and gender inequalities may have superseded race as the dominant determining factors in this employment relationship. The difficulty is the fact that race, class and gender are inextricably linked together, and as such to argue that one of them alone is determining the parameters of the employer/servant relationship is not possible. However despite these difficulties, I believe there is some credence to Cock's 'microcosm' conceptualisation, particularly if improvements in the working conditions of domestic workers were found. Improvements, irrespective of the links between race, gender, and class, would demonstrate that the racial practices of apartheid were lessening, or if not lessening not increasing. For example, even if the argument put forward for the improvement in the working lives of domestic workers, was the fact that class and gender inequalities are being bridged, it would have to be acknowledged that racial relationships had not deteriorated further.

It is not only the linkage between race, class and gender that makes domestic service a difficult area of study, but also the employer and servant relationship is imbued with contradictory and hidden meanings. For example, a mask of deference may well hide disdain for the employer by the employee (see Rollins 1985, Cock 1989/1979, Scott 1990). Scott in particular has argued that the more vulnerable and dependent the subordinate is, the more deferential will be their demeanour. Also, as South Africa promotes the notion of being the 'rainbow nation', that is, a multi-cultural society, the

fear of social censure might inhibit the articulation of racially held beliefs. For example, I was told by one employer that I had to understand that there were 'cultural differences', which I interpreted as a euphemism for racial differences. In the post-war years of Nazi Germany amnesia and distance from the activities of the Party members was a position taken by significant numbers of the German people. Similarly, in the majority of interviews with white employers, I noted a distancing from the apartheid regime. For example, an employer in response to my question, 'Has the ending of apartheid made it more difficult to get servants?' responded by stating that apartheid was not really part of this country and had never been so. She further asserted that politics is something most South Africans had never been involved in. It is for this reason, she believed, that apartheid's passing would not effect the domestic service situation. She concluded her remarks by stating that apartheid had never been part of the domestic service relationship, as most people in this country had never agreed with its principles. These expressed sentiments were similar to many other white employers' opinions.

It is to overcome the challenges that I have incorporated a deeper theoretical level into my analysis of domestic service than thought necessary by Cock in her original research. I will briefly overview the theoretical considerations and will explore them more fully in the Literature Review chapter. The fieldwork analysis will reflect these theoretical roots. Hegel theorises the hidden meanings of the relationship between the powerful and the oppressed and it is for this reason that Hegelian concepts are the starting point of this aspect of the research. For example, I use the empirical setting of domestic service to explore Hegel's Lordship and Bondage concepts. Hegel (1977) asserts that the consciousness of who we are is realised in our relationship to 'the other'. The status and perception of self for both parties is achieved through

reciprocal struggle in this complex societal relationship. This Hegelian base can be applied to many relationships and as such, there is the possibility of multiplicities of struggles with the outcome of multiple 'others'. I therefore develop the concept of 'chains of otherness' and their implications for domestic workers. Feminist theorising has also developed considerably since Cock's initial research, and I have incorporated these more sophisticated arguments into the analysis. For example, I explore the notion of 'embodied' female labour as a counterpoise to Marx's explanation of labour becoming abstract through the mechanisms of capitalism. There is also the great wealth of debate surrounding the notion of the colonial 'other' that is addressed in the study. The coloniser fetishes the colonised as the erotic, mystic, and barbaric inferior people. As domestic service in South Africa has strong roots in colonialism, exploration of 'the other', using this historical reference, is also of relevance.

This theoretical aspect of the research raises specific questions. Firstly, have domestic servants been empowered by societal restructuring? The notion of empowerment can easily be translated into an abstract concept, becoming feminist rhetoric with little substance. I therefore utilised some of Rollin's research techniques to situate the concept of empowerment in a concrete reality. I considered not only the dialogue between employers and servants but also the dress and demeanour of both parties. Secondly, had employers themselves now donned a mask of racial tolerance and acceptance in a changing society? An old maxim came forcibly to mind as a means to answer this question. 'What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear a word you say'. I therefore considered not only the dialogue used by employers to their servants but also their actions towards them. For example, Helen, an owner of a small domestic service agency, who worked alongside her domestic workers, stated the following:

I made up my mind that if I am going to do something I have got to do everything they do [the employees]. I cannot turn around and say you haven't scrubbed that floor properly if I haven't scrubbed the floor properly. We all came onto this earth naked and we will all go out naked. It doesn't matter what you do or how grand you are.

This evidence of empathy was not necessarily consistent with her other behaviour. For example, when one of her maids asked for an advance on her wages to purchase a microwave she went with her to check it. The action was explained as follows; black people were extremely gullible, and ran up huge debts on credit on purchases which were neither necessary or in good working condition. The problem was exacerbated if they had business dealings within their own community, as the black vendor would more than likely be looking to off-load defective merchandise. Helen went on to state that she was worried that her maid could easily be duped into 'silly' purchases. This example illustrates that working together with servants, even vocalising precepts of racial equality cannot be taken as evidence of racial prejudice being overcome. The ideologies of racism may well be maintained and can paradoxically, as in this case cited, be revealed under the guise of kindness. Hence the need to consider not only the words but also the actions of employers.

Having brought the exploration of the hidden meanings of the employment relationship onto the agenda of the research, this clearly moved the research into an interpretive approach. The potential pitfall of this type of investigation was focusing too heavily on the relationship between the employer and her servant, so much so that the wider societal implications could be overlooked. For example, a maid's deference to her madam is undoubtedly founded on the power inequality between the two women. However, the wider societal factors shaping this inequality significantly enhance the employer's position. The following interview extract illustrates the point:

First response:

I'm not sure 'cos I not properly go to school. I was a sick child.
My mother needed work, she had to work. We had very little money.
I had to help look after my brothers and sisters. I not get a job
I stayed home with them.

Where was your father?

No father.

Second response to, What other job would you have liked to have done?

Any job [...] when you don't go to school, you have no chance.

As intimated in the opening remarks of the thesis, to ensure that the wider societal implications were addressed I have incorporated two chapters, which will examine domestic service in the comparative and global context and the political economy of South Africa.

(ii) Research Methodology:

The main purpose of the research is to ascertain whether the dismantling of apartheid has improved the working lives of domestic workers in South Africa. Implicit in this remit is the comparison of the 'then', the apartheid era, and the 'now', the post-apartheid present. As I have not personally researched domestic service under apartheid, I had to use the research findings of others from the period as the starting point to my own research. I have to justify the reliability and validity of my research question. Locality, by this I mean local customs and culture, demographic ratios, industry and employment opportunities will undoubtedly vary from region to region. Situating the research in a similar site to one that has been researched before minimises these distorting factors and therefore increases my research reliability and validity. I deliberately chose Grahamstown as the site of my research as this was the

point to note is the fact that Cock's own research cannot be seen as a universal barometer of domestic service in South Africa during the apartheid years. My initial concerns to ensure validity and reliability because of regional variations hold true for Cock's 1979 research. The Eastern Cape is the second poorest province in South Africa, the Northern Province being the first. Cock's results may well have been distorted by specific regional conditions. In utilising her study as a starting point to my research, my research question must narrow to that of, has the dismantling of apartheid improved the working lives of domestic workers in the Eastern Cape of South Africa?

To answer the research question most effectively a longitudinal study would have been the most effective method to employ, that is, to re-interview Cock's survey participants. Altogether, she, with the aid of a field worker, surveyed 225 households. Not all were interviewed in-depth.

Three different interview schedules were used: (i) 125 domestic workers were briefly interviewed by me using a structural interview schedule focusing on objective aspects of their work situation; (ii) 50 domestic workers were interviewed in depth by a field worker using a semi-structured interview which focused on both objective and subjective aspects of their situation; (iii) fifty employers of domestic servants were interviewed by me using a semi-structured interview schedule which similarly focused on both objective and subjective aspects (Cock, 1989/1979: 170).

The magnitude of such a project was not feasible because of the size of Cock's survey and the time lapse since her research. However, I did determine to approach Professor Cock in order to get her approval and details of a small number of her original sample. Having obtained the names and addresses of the selected few I would then have attempted the difficult task of tracing the interviewees twenty years on. Unfortunately, Professor Cock had no longer retained her field notes. She remembered the great hostility in which her research findings were received. For

example, in December 1980, ‘a 20-centimeter-long pack of dynamite sticks’ was thrown through her front window (Cock, 1989/1979: 165). Professor Cock was not only worried for own safety but also that of those who had spoken to her. She deliberately destroyed all the names and addresses of the participants in the study, in order that they could not be traced, threatened or harmed in any way.

In our first meeting in June 1999, she reasserted her belief that her study had been more than an exploration of a working relationship, as it had brought onto the agenda a critical scrutiny of apartheid itself. The reaction she received to the publication of her findings, and her own subsequent actions, does give credence to her conviction. The outcome for me, was the impossibility of tracing any of the original participants in the research. I therefore relied on the next best option, conducting the research in a similar site to that of Cock’s. I also used a similar format in the design of the interview schedules. I adopted her semi-structured approach and in some instances repeated her original questions¹. Like Cock, I had the same aim of gaining ‘objective and subjective’ data. For example, in respect of objective data, personal background, details of their workings lives such as hours of work, holiday arrangements, pay, benefits in kind, work tasks, etc. In respect of subjective data, hopes, aspirations, feelings towards one another and the transitional South African situation were all explored. The methodology employed was not a replication of Cock’s in that, unlike her, I was not seeking a representative sample.

Cock’s (1989/1979: 168) survey was the framework of her research. Her main objective was to ensure that her sample was representative of the population. Ensuring representativeness would enable her to generalise, consider the patterns and

trends of domestic service in the 'Zuurveld' area. Also, this would give support to her wider contention that domestic service was a microcosm of apartheid. If trends and patterns did emerge, she could then draw correlations to the wider societal patterns. For example, the exploitation and abuse of black labour via wages and long hours, the immense gulf between the quality of life of the two peoples and the emphatic nature of class, gender and racial divisions. Cock drew the samples from four sample frames. The first was white electricity accounts for Grahamstown, she took every twenty-second address from over three thousand accounts: giving her one hundred and fifty addresses. (This was her urban Albany sample). Secondly, she did a similar exercise with white electricity accounts in Port Alfred, she took every twenty-fourth address; giving her thirty-three addresses from almost eight hundred. (This was her urban Bathurst sample). Her third sample frame was the veterinary Services list of farmers in the Albany district. She obtained fifteen addresses from five hundred and twenty eight farms and smallholdings by taking every thirty-fifth address. (This was her rural Albany sample). Finally, she used the Veterinary Services list of farmers in the Bathurst district to obtain twenty-two more addresses. Every sixteenth address was taken from three hundred farms and smallholdings. (This was her rural Bathurst sample). This gave her two hundred and twenty five interviews all together (Cock, 1989/1979: 173). It is not my intention to challenge or examine the representativeness of her sample, only to emphasize that this was a central feature of the methodology.

My focus was not an overview/examination of domestic service per se in the area, but rather an in-depth analysis of a small number of domestic service relationships. Cock's theoretical focus was heavily targeted on the then prevalent domestic labour debate, with emphasis on situating domestic labour in the Marxist analysis of use-

value and surplus–value of labour, and the reproduction and production of labour power. My aim is to add a different theoretical level to the examination of domestic service, focusing on the dependencies of the relationships and the feelings of the individuals involved. Ideally, I would have liked a representative sample that included several examples of each type of relationship in which I was interested. However, as an individual student with a set period for the conducting of the research this approach was not feasible, so I deliberately chose various mixes, for example, ethnic, class, and age mixes, in order to examine these theoretical arguments in the context of diverse domestic relationships. To clarify the point, I sought an Afrikaner madam and black maid, an English-speaking madam and black maid, a black madam and black maid, a coloured madam and black maid, an Asian madam and black maid, a young madam and old maid, and vice versa, an old madam with young maid and madam and maid of similar age. Education, or rather the lack of it, is a significant factor in the domestic service relationship, so I also sought out an educated maid as well as the prevalent uneducated maids. The educated maid I interviewed had a teaching Diploma, and qualifications in Accountancy, Xhosa, and Business Economics. Since 1996 when she was awarded her Diploma she has been trying unsuccessfully to gain employment as a teacher. I also considered domestic service relationships both in the urban and rural areas. The different class locations of madams were also explored. For example, traditionally it has not only been middle class women who have employed domestics, working class women also employ servants (see van Onselen, 1982).

The technique employed to gain access to these different mixes was the one of ‘snowballing’. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on arrival in Grahamstown, I contacted the local Church for assistance in contacting

potential interviewees. I was introduced to Mavis, an elderly member, who had been a resident of the town for all of her life and consequently knew many white people in the Grahamstown locality. I gave her my list of requirements and she made the initial contact for me with the first three white interviewees. From these interviews, which also included interviews with their servants, I asked if they knew anyone else who employed a domestic or was one themselves. If the reply was in the affirmative, I then requested background details on the above-mentioned persons. From the information gleaned, I then determined whether to pursue the interview. If I wanted to proceed, I requested an introduction via the person I was presently interviewing. My original access to the black community came from one of the original interviews organised by Mavis with a white employer. This employer suggested that I contacted her friend 'Eddie', an elderly retired Xhosa man, whose wife was a matron in a local clinic. Following the same format as with Mavis, I gave Eddie and his wife a list of my requirements and they proceeded to make the initial contacts for me. Similarly, as I interviewed my non-white interviewees I discussed with them their knowledge of other employers with domestic workers and asked them for introductions to other potential interviewees.

I only received one negative response, and this was for a Xhosa speaking maid working for a coloured madam, who told Eddie that she was too shy to speak to a white foreigner. All the other approaches were successful. This in itself, for me, was an indicator of a shift since the days of apartheid. The hostility and suspicion that Cock had to endure was not once my experience. Perhaps it can be argued that with apartheid's demise there is not the great need to defend or justify the actions of state anymore or aggressively hide or distort gross acts of abuse and exploitation. Equally, the fact that many of the employers interviewed had distanced themselves from the

apartheid era may also have been an influencing factor in their openness. Using this technique, I was able to conduct forty-two interviews over a three-month period. Seven of these interviews were from a pilot study in Johannesburg, two of the interviews were group interviews, one was with social workers working in Grahamstown, and the other was with teachers also working in Grahamstown.

Three biases emerged through this snowballing technique. Firstly, although the different mix of employers was achieved relatively easily I was not able to obtain a mix of different ages of domestic workers. The only relatively younger domestic worker I interviewed was Jane, who was thirty years of age at the time of interview. (Jane's specific details will be presented in Case Study 6 in Chapter 5 of the thesis). All the other interviewees were between the 40 to 58 age ranges. I would have preferred to incorporate younger domestic workers in my sample, as this may have shown some degree of variations in the domestic service relationship. For example, Brenda, the employer in Case Study 1, stated that she preferred older domestic workers as they knew 'their place'. Brenda discussed in detail with me the 'problems' that she had encountered with younger maids. This does seem to suggest that deference may be influenced by the age of the worker, possibly because older women, believed that their opportunities for alternative employment were slim, and were resigned to compliance to the dictates of their employers. In addition, having lived all their lives under the apartheid regime, indoctrination of its precepts may have been assimilated to a greater degree than in the younger generation. Brenda's attitude might be more general, for instance, in meetings with the Grahamstown Area District Relief Association (GADRA), I was informed that on its unemployment register of domestic workers, the 25-36-age range was the highest. It was their experience, and opinion, that many employers preferred older women as domestics. Employers'

preferences could be realised because unemployment in the sector was at such high levels that there were large numbers of potential employees to choose from. In my meetings with social workers and teachers in Grahamstown they all indicated that many of the children they came into contact with were being raised by their grandparents, as their parents had left the area in order to obtain employment. Therefore, I concluded that the high propensity of older domestic workers in my sample had been influenced by the specific regional conditions of the Grahamstown area. In addition, that deference was part of employers' criteria for their servants and this was an influencing factor in their choice of older servants.

Secondly, I was reliant on the initial recommendations of Mavis and Eddie and my other interviewees to gain access to other candidates for interview. As they were the selectors, there could be within their choice a filtering out of what they deemed unsuitable candidates. However, because of the nature of the domestic service relationship, if filtering was being carried out it could not have been exact. As stated earlier, domestic service is an occupation that takes place behind closed doors, that is, it is a private relationship, and as such much will be withheld from public view. Even if the recommendations were made on presumptions of suitability, the information to make such an assessment may be limited. The third problem with this technique is the interviewee's ready co-operation. This could suggest that they have nothing significant to hide. I do believe this was a minimal risk in the South African context, as conversely it could be argued that in the prevailing ethos of 'truth and reconciliation' interviewees would be prepared to reveal more about their working relationship than during apartheid. The problem with ready concurrence to interview could mean that I was focusing on harmonious relationships, which could result in a skewed assessment.

Recognising the potential biases in my sample, I tried to gain a wider view of the domestic service situation in the Grahamstown area. I approached both the Department of Labour and Grahamstown Advisory Office to gain an overview of the types of problems in domestic service relationships that came to their attention during 1999, the year of my fieldwork. In the period January–July 1999 the Department of Labour mediated in forty-five disputes between domestics and their employers. Significantly, the majority of the domestic servants in these disputes were between 25–40 years of age. This is an indicator that younger women may be more prepared to challenge the terms of their working arrangements than older domestic workers. However, the numbers of reported incidents were small and as such could also be interpreted that significant numbers of domestic workers of all ages were not prepared to formally challenge their employers. The range of disputes have included allegations of theft, unfair dismissals for pregnancy, sickness, and work standards, failure to pay over–time rates, and inadequate wages. I also used secondary data from the Rhodes Cory library to add more detail to the overview of the domestic service situation. Specifically, the Cory Library had copies of case notes from Grahamstown’s Advisory Office for domestic workers seeking advice and help. Again, these were relatively few in numbers, but unfortunately did not indicate the ages of the domestic workers seeking help from the Advisory Office. Having sacrificed representativeness in the sample, I have to accept the restrictions that are applicable to all qualitative research. I am not able to justify drawing conclusions for all domestic service in this area. My research focus was therefore narrowed even further. The answer to the question, ‘has domestic service improved in the Eastern Cape in the post-apartheid setting?’, could only be related to the select number of women I have interviewed. This I feel is an acceptable outcome, as the depth of analysis I have achieved through the introduction of this theoretical level is breaking

new ground and adds a new dimension to the study of the domestic service relationship in South Africa.

For the purposes of the three chapters presenting and analysing the fieldwork, I have not utilised all the interview data. Rather I have chosen eighteen women in nine case studies. The rest of my interview material I have used to contextualise and substantiate my theoretical arguments within the thesis. As one of my major objectives was to consider the relationship between the employer and domestic worker I decided to focus intensively on a relatively small number in order to examine in detail the nuances of their interactions one to another. In addition to separate interviews with each of the employers and their servants, I also conducted participant and non-participant observations of the two parties together. These micro-techniques result in the data being extrapolated in more detail and greater length than other methods of research. As the thesis has to be presented within specific word limits to present all the data in this manner was not possible. The outcome would have been six chapters being required to present and analysis the fieldwork rather than the allotted three. In addition, many of the domestic workers interviewed had similar life-styles in that they were relatively uneducated, main financial providers for their families and had worked in this sector all their working lives. Inevitably, this patterning in the domestic workers' life situations results in many common features in the domestic service relationship with their employers. For example, vulnerability, dependency, compliance with their employers' demands and a deferential manner were prevalent characteristics of the majority of domestic workers I interviewed. Therefore, if six chapters had been utilised for the examination of the fieldwork, because of these similarities, many of the analytical points and observations would have been repetitious.

The justification for the choice of the eighteen women is set out in the three fieldwork chapters. However, I will overview the rationale for their inclusion here. In Chapter 4 the six women in the first three case studies are representative of the majority of employers and domestic servants that I interviewed. These women were more articulate and willing to talk at length than other interviewees, but nonetheless were very similar to the other women I interviewed. The employers were white and had employed servants through the transition of the dismantling of apartheid. All were situated in the urban and rural areas of Grahamstown, which was a replication of Cock's 1979 research site. The servants were all poor, relatively uneducated and of the same ethnic origin. In addition to being reflective of the majority of my interviewees, these three case studies are the most similar to that of Cock's. Therefore, I will utilise them in my remit of using Cock's research as a starting point to my own. The six women in Chapter 5 have been included because they were the most diverse to the majority of other women that I interviewed. The unique characteristics of their domestic service relationships offered a different site to explore my theoretical arguments. In Chapter 6, the non-white employers and their servants were chosen because the class distance was significant between the parties in the domestic service relationship. The objective here was to ascertain if class differences were manifesting themselves along parallel lines to those of race. It is also noteworthy that Cock in her original research did not include non-white employers in her research. My addition of these types of employers, together with the size of my sample and the differing theoretical approach to that of Cock, are the main reasons that her research is the starting point for my own rather than being used as a direct comparison to my research.

(iii) Practical Challenges:

A major difficulty I had in accessing interviewees was finding a working class woman with a maid. I only managed to find one and even this was not completely satisfactory. Due to her own retrenchment (redundancy) Helen had dismissed her maid approximately four weeks before my interview with her. With the introduction of the Labour Relations Act 1995 (LRA) and the amended Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1994 (BCEA) it seems that the number of working class women employing domestics in a full time capacity is diminishing. Helen had started a domestic service agency in 1999 to provide domestics on a casual basis to those people who no longer wanted or could afford servants on a permanent basis. Also, in a meeting with a representative of GADRA in July 1999, I was informed as of June 1999, that they had on their register over nine hundred unemployed domestics all seeking re-employment in a similar occupation. I was told that the nine hundred figure quoted was not an accurate figure of unemployed domestics in the area, only those GADRA have accepted on their register. Many women seeking to be placed on the register were turned away. Successful placements as of June 1999 were running at the rate of one per month. However, this may not necessarily be full-time work but rather could be one or two days work per week. This does seem to add credence to my belief that the number of domestics being employed by working class women is on the decline.

The figures quoted by GADRA would also imply that middle class women might also be reducing the hours of employment for domestics. It was GADRA's opinion that if a minimum wage was introduced for this form of employment the situation would worsen. In July 1999, the Department of Labour was involved in tripartite

discussions between unions, government representatives, and public forums for the implementation of a minimum wage. The negotiations were such that the Department's representatives were confident that concrete legislation would be in place sometime during the year 2000. It was expected that the minimum wage would vary from region to region, and because of this, the Eastern Cape's minimum wage for domestics would be amongst the lowest set. GADRA, convinced that the minimum wage for domestics would become a reality, was in July 1999 considering ways of retraining former domestics in new occupations, such as craft making schemes. The introduction of a minimum wage for domestic servants has provoked fierce debate in South Africa. All the employers I interviewed raised it as a concern, and most were planning to dismiss their servants if it became law. By early 2001 a minimum wage for domestic servants had not been implemented.

A second potential empirical challenge was self-imposed. As a major part of my remit was the examination of the relationship between employers and servants, I determined to conduct all the interviews myself. This was a departure from Cock's interview techniques. Cock did not personally conduct in-depth interviews with the black domestic workers in her study. She believed the women would have been too intimidated to speak to her, not only because of fear of repercussions with their employers but also in their own communities.² A black fieldworker working on her behalf conducted the interviews with all of the chosen domestic servants. I was aware that there was a distance that I would have to bridge between my interviewees and me. The majority of the domestic workers in my sample worked for white employers, as a white woman myself, I could easily be identified as 'with them'. In addition, I

² Both black and white Grahamstown residents remembered and referred to several reprisals, 'necklace' killings, for supposed black informers to white authorities during the 1980's period. The black driver I hired told me that during this same period his car was burnt out and a warning given that

was an educated foreigner from a relatively privileged background who could not converse in the Xhosa language. No matter how well intentioned my motives were, I had to develop a coherent strategy to communicate effectively with these women. Spivak's admonition regarding 'understanding one's privilege as one's loss' underpinned the formulation of my interview techniques. She states:

Our privileges, whatever they maybe in terms of race, class, nationality, gender and the like, may have prevented us from gaining a certain kind of Other knowledge; not simply information that we have not yet received, but the knowledge that we are not equipped to understand by reason of our social positions. To unlearn our privileges means, on the one hand to do our homework, to work hard at gaining some knowledge of the others who occupy those spaces most closed to our privileged view. On the other hand it means attempting to speak to those others in such a way that they might take us seriously and, most important of all, be able to answer back (Landry, 1996: 415).

Before commencing the interviews, I therefore hired Eddie as my driver to take me round the townships surrounding Grahamstown. Eddie, introduced me to many of his friends and I was invited into various homes, clinics and schools in the townships. I was also invited to witness a young boy's initiation ceremony into manhood in a small village in the Transkei. With the help of a local historian, I read books on Xhosa history and customs. Eddie's wife volunteered her services as my interpreter, which was a great asset to my research. As a matron in a local clinic she knew personally many of the women I was interviewing, having treated them for various ailments through the years. It seemed to me that she was a woman highly respected within the local black community whose judgement was trusted. I made this assessment because my interviewees visibly relaxed in her presence and discussed at length with her the questions being asked. I therefore decided to invite her along to some other of my interviews where the domestic worker could speak English. Visiting domestic workers in their own homes in the townships was both a rewarding and sad

experience. I was able to glimpse beyond these women's working lives and their relationship with their employers to see how little many of them had in terms of the material benefits of life.

I realised early in my interview schedule that not only did my questions have to be simple but also, how I asked them had to be considered, particularly with some of the older domestic workers. One maid I interviewed had deliberately decided as a young woman that if she could avoid working for a white woman she would do so. As a small girl, her parents had worked on a local farm and she found her memories of their Afrikaans employers unpleasant. All her adult life she had worked for a coloured Madam who was to become her closest friend. At the commencement of the interview, she sat sideways on with her eyes lowered. My interpreter informed me that she had only agreed to speak to me as a personal favour to herself. I asked my interpreter,

Why is she sat like that?

You frighten her.

Why?

You are a white woman.

At this point my interviewee and interpreter started talking rapidly in Xhosa.

She has asked me, "Why this white woman 'not shout at me? Why is her voice so soft?"

Another exchange took place between the two women.

She really likes your voice. She says you speak just like Princess Diana used to.

Upon which I started to laugh, asked my interpreter to thank her and told her to say how nice it was to be thought of like a princess. It was just such a shame that I only spoke like Diana and didn't look like her! After my interpreter had relayed my words, my interviewee also started

to laugh, turned round and looked at me. Through the interpreter, we then spent some considerable time talking about such things as the weather in England, the wages people earned in England, the Royal Family, in particular Diana's death and our respective children.

A 'soft' voice, a relaxed style and humour and spending upto an hour just 'chatting' before asking any specific questions was the standard pattern that emerged with my interviews. I had assumed my 'foreignness' would have been a hindrance to effective communication. As the above interview extract demonstrates this proved to be the reverse. The majority of the domestic workers I interviewed were avidly interested in English life, and although not all possessed televisions they all had some sort of access to one. As with the above interview, the televised death and funeral of Princess Diana was a talking point with many of the domestic workers. As I was a 'foreigner', the women also understood that I had not been part of their apartheid past and were keen to explain to me what life had been like for them under the regime.

Spivak having raised the issue of the distance between 'the privileged' and 'the other' recognises that this line of thought could result in an apologist outcome. For example, she states:

What we are asking for is that the [...] holders of hegemonic discourse should de-hegemonize their position and themselves learn how to occupy the subject position of the other rather than say, "Ok, sorry, we are just good white people, therefore we do not speak for the blacks." That's the kind of breast-beating that is left behind at the threshold and then business goes on as usual (Harasym, 1990: 121).

In focusing on my difference as a privileged white, this paradoxically could compound differences between my interviewees and me. Therefore, in interviews with employers and domestic workers I specifically looked for and emphasised our common experiences as women. It would have been naïve to assume that recognition of our common gender would result in female bonding. However, sharing unique experiences of womanhood did lessen the race and class chasm. For example, we

discussed our childbirth experiences, relationships and strategies with male partners and offspring, education and aspirations for our children, managing domestic duties with work commitments and shopping. Many of the women I spoke to were devout Christians and this too was a bond that we shared. I attended church services in the townships and was welcomed even when I was the only white face in the congregation.

Having discussed interview techniques, this does not mean to imply that communication was achieved simply through a calculated methodology rather than genuine concern and intent. The dire conditions of the lives of some of the domestic workers were heart-rending and I was to cry as well as laugh with those I interviewed.

The following interview extracts illustrate the point,

Interview with Rose from Johannesburg pilot study

Despite her pleasant working life, Rose still felt a great sense of injustice. At the close of the interview, she got really animated when talking about her hopes and aspirations. She has no such hopes for herself as life she has led was and is inevitable. Rose just desired that the next generation would have the choices she never had. "If you want to be a nurse you should have the chance to be a nurse. Every child should read and write, not like me." She felt quite ambivalent about apartheid's passing, that is, neither optimistic nor pessimistic about her own future. Life would be for her what it had always been – doing what she had to do. Having interviewed her, she then proceeded to interview me. She wanted to know what I was doing, why I was here and what I would do with the information. Rose found it amusing that we were the same age, **[at the time of interview both forty –two]**, but also sad that I was educated whilst she was illiterate. Her final words were quite sobering, "You make a difference, you help my people."

Interview with Rebecca from Grahamstown study

Rebecca and her family lived in a mud hut, which the family had erected themselves. It was clear to me that Rebecca felt isolated and alone because of her living arrangements. "They **[the neighbours]** say I am living like I do because of all the children I have. **[Rebecca has nine children and a disabled husband to support]** They laugh at me, but I don't care. God is there for me. I ask him everyday to get me out of here. You walk with God I can tell, you pray for me too, ask him to help me."

The amelioration of the poor social conditions of the domestic workers I interviewed was beyond my powers. However, I have been asked by the South African Gender Commission to report my findings to them. The Commission is, as of 2001, involved in working for the implementation of contracts of employment for all domestic workers. Although my sample is small, the Commission has requested access to my results, in order to use them as an example of pay and conditions in this sector of employment. Similarly, Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg is engaged in a Government sponsored project to explore current working conditions and have expressed an interest in considering my data. Finally, as earlier intimated, the proposed introduction of a minimum wage for domestic workers has provoked fierce debate in South Africa. I have been involved in discussions at local level with the Department of Labour and public forums.

(iv) Theoretical Challenges:

My theoretical dilemma centred on the definition of terms. The difficulty only became apparent to me retrospectively when I started analysing the fieldwork data. My problem arose in the application of the term 'paternalism' to characterise some of my research findings. Cock (1989/79:68) had used the concept in her analysis of the domestic service relationship. Her application of the term was in line with Genovese's (1976) paternalism paradigm in respect of the institution of slavery. Paternalism by this definition is that whites see themselves in a parental role in their relationship to blacks, because 'the child' is incapable of making independent choices. Genovese further argued that the whites used the notion of paternalism as a moral justification for the institution of slavery. The rationale being that an inferior people was incapable of self-sustained 'civilised' life. The outcome is the justification of the

promotion of the racial parental and child analogy. Both in the slavery context and Cock's study, applying the terminology of paternalism to the respective relationships under investigation was exact and appropriate. Underpinning both their social contexts was the power of the male head of household. For Genovese, it was the male slaveholder's position that was sacrosanct and subordination of his female kin was as total as that of the slave. Cock similarly argued that despite the fact that the white female employer was responsible for the daily interactions with her maid, the boundaries of the relationship were defined by the male of the house. For example, Cock (1989/1979: 14) rejected emphatically the Brancian notion of 'universal sisterhood' but still argued that the 'dominant hegemony of patriarchy' was suppressing women in South Africa irrespective of colour. The implications of her assertion being that employers and their servants although far from equal were all subordinated because of gender impositions. Paternalism as a defining concept addressed both the racial and gender implications. I assumed that I would be able to use similar terminology if I found evidence of parent and child ideology in the domestic service relationship.

I did indeed discover a strong familial justification by employers in describing their relationship with their servants. Many of the domestic workers themselves informed me that their employers were just like their mothers. In my mind, I simply noted the incidents as clear evidence of paternalism. However, in many instances, the paternalistic relationship was imbued with a specific face – one of kindness. Anderson, in her research into migrant domestic work also found evidence of kindness in the relationship. This she believed, was a strategy of employers to maintain power and control over their servants. She asserts, 'Power may be manifest over others [...] by helping them as well as hurting them' (Anderson, 2000: 144). I

also found evidence of the power and kindness dynamic in my research. The following analogy clarifies the point; if we consider the parent and child scenario, exploitation when it is stark and overt breaks through even the innocence of a child. The child becomes aware of its own abuse because it is so blatant, and resistance even if it is hidden will develop. However, an outward show of kindness may well disguise from the child the fact that it is being exploited. Perhaps it would not be an overstatement to suggest that kindness in this relationship is more insidious than overt exploitation as the recipient may be unaware of the reality of their circumstances and consequently the power of the employer has over them is enhanced. In order to ensure that the input of kindness into the power relationship was not overlooked I decided to amend the term paternalism to that of ‘benevolent paternalism’.

As my analysis proceeded and I applied, where appropriate, my ‘benevolent paternalism’ conceptualisation I became concerned that it was significantly flawed. It seemed incongruous that I would be describing a female relationship with inferred male terminology. Unlike Genovese and Cock, my employers were not being overshadowed by male supremacy within their homes. Some of my interviewees were single women, those that had male partners clearly were determining for themselves the parameters of the relationship with their servants. For instance, the following interview extract demonstrates that this female employer had autonomy in her dealings with her servant.

It was Narina who had always dealt with the servants. She laughingly remarked that she doubted very much if Niclaas [**husband**] knew what a washing basket was. She was firm in her assertion that she had spoilt him. Narina chose his clothes that he was to wear for the day and laid them out on the bed for him to put on. “Niclaas”, she stated, “has never hung up his clothes in all the years of our married life”. She picked up after him and clean clothes then appeared in the wardrobe. I asked about the financial arrangements of the family, did she know what her husband had earned during his working life, and equally did he know what her finances were. Narina replied that she was the ‘banker’ of the family and had always been in charge of the finances. She doubted very

much if Niclaas knew how much they had in the bank. She wrote all the cheques and made all the bank visits when necessary. It was her sole decision as to what to pay the servants.

It would not be stretching the argument too far to suggest in this particular case that in some respects the wife had assumed the role of mother to her husband. It was cases like the one previously cited that led me to believe that 'maternalism' rather than 'paternalism' was a more apt description of the parent and child relationship in the madam and maid relationship.

In re-reading Rollins I realised that she too in her earlier research into domestic service in the United States had reached similar conclusions.

[...] the appropriate term is not 'paternalism' but 'maternalism'. And this change is more than semantic: women, who have been the majority of employers of domestics in the West [...] have modified the relationship to distinctively feminine ways, thus creating a dynamic similar but not identical with paternalism. [...] the importance of the employer's being female in affecting the position, tone, and dynamics of the relationship cannot be overestimated. (Rollins, 1985: 179).

The ends of maternalism parallel those of paternalism, that is, the maintenance of the servant in the role of a perpetual child. It is the means, the tactics employed which are different. The workings of maternalism are less overt in that a complex emotional dynamic develops between employer and employee. There is a professed self-effacement on the madam's part, yet in reality, by assuming a maternal role in relation to her servant it is a reaffirmation of her superior self in relation to 'the other'. Although on one level she enacts a kind and nurturing role, on a purely pragmatic level she is able to exploit her position to the detriment of her servant. The following interview extract demonstrates this fact. The employer suggests her proposed action is motivated by kindness, but underneath there is the desire to obtain free childcare provision whilst on holiday.

We will tell Jessie in December it is your holiday too. Would you like to come with us? If she says yes it will be good. She enjoys Troy

[**employer's son**], it will give us a break from him. [...] there are no problems with husbands with Jessie she is by herself. Husbands can be difficult. The one who got sick [**previous maid**] used to have to come in on a Sunday to work for us, but they do get extra pay for that. Her husband didn't like it. The Sunday we were getting Troy christened, we had lots of people coming round. She was late and we had to be at church. It was very disappointing. Her husband was being difficult, he was moaning about who was going to look after their children. It is good Jessie is single, we can take her with us for the weekend when we want to.

The term maternalism therefore would seem a more appropriate definition than paternalism, as it incorporates the parent and child ideology and acknowledges the power and kindness dynamic. It also recognises, as will be discussed later, a separate female space, which is characterised by emotional bonds between the participants in the labour relationship. It is important to note that maternalism, as a defining term for the domestic service relationship is not uncontested. Anderson (2000: 144) argues that the characteristics of paternalism and maternalism are not fundamentally different. Her argument is that maternalism is a divisive force between women and therefore indirectly reinforces patriarchy: I concede her point, however I still believe it is insufficient to discard the concept. Having decided to utilise a maternalistic conceptualisation, I accept that it has weaknesses. Rollins (1985: 179) herself readily admitted that 'paternalism' and 'maternalism' are not equivalent in their conceptual or social meanings.

The historical evidence suggests that the practice of paternalism has entailed an enhancement of self, power and esteem by the subjugation of all others. Furthermore, the paternalistic supreme position was not achieved, but ascribed through class, racial and gender ideology. Davidoff (1999: 166), quoting from a late 19th Century newspaper article in respect of domestic service, illuminates the male superior position not only to his servants but also his wife and children. ' [...] the highly

educated class or head of the social body, should occupy itself in doing its proper work of thinking for the welfare of the hands and feet which serve it'. Maternalism, although undoubtedly a silent participant, has never been acknowledged as a shaping force in the unfolding pages of history. The historical evidence for the maternal role suggests that it has been an invisible one where the female loses self to promote those that she serves. Her roles as carer, nurturer and service-giver, have all been contributing factors to her self-effacement. Integral to maternal ideology is the giving up of self for the benefit of the child. The conceptualisation of maternalism used for male justification of female confinement within the domestic sphere. Hall (1979: 27), in describing the female role in the Victorian Evangelical Clapham Sect makes the following pertinent observation:

Women were both central to and absent from the Clapham Sect. They were central in that the definition of their position constituted a major area of Evangelical thought and writing. They were absent in that the absolute assumption of their subordination meant that their activities were hidden.

This evidence does not directly relate to maternalism, but the implications for maternalism are unmistakable. The maternal role, by the very fact that it was a female 'activity' was not only unseen, but expected to be one of giving to others.

In summary of the argument, the historical development of the conceptualisations of paternalism and maternalism would suggest that, the former resulted in an enhancement of self, the latter a loss of self. Rollins does not explore these fuller implications rather states that historically paternalism and maternalism have not developed along parallel lines. Anderson (2000: 145-146) implicitly appears to recognise the underlying self-efficacy of maternalism.

Although ostensibly bringing the 'female' characteristics of nurturing and kindness to the employment relationship, this nurturing does not facilitate development, but sets the domestic worker in permanent inferiority, to be pitied, helped, but never viewed as an equal.

I concluded, after having considered the ramifications of the concept of maternalism that I would utilise the term but in a modified manner. (The modification will be discussed later).

In my research, I found no evidence of employers in their dealings with their servants sacrificing self, but rather like paternalism, the relationship only enhanced the employer's position of power and image of self. The employer insists on a childlike role for her servant then assumes a maternal role to ensure that her employee is locked into her role of perpetual childhood. To confirm my assessment that employers were maintaining a parent and child relationship with their servants because it benefited them to do so I used an employer as the interpreter with her maid. I later re-interviewed the domestic worker with my own Xhosa interpreter at a different venue.

The following extract from the first interview is evidence to support my assertion.

The maid I interviewed was undoubtedly extremely grateful and relieved that she had a job because she was illiterate. She was fully aware that because of this handicap this had considerably narrowed her job opportunities, therefore any job was an achievement. What she did not question was why she could not read and write. She simply told me that because she was brought up on a farm she never had the opportunity to go to school. I asked her would she not like to learn to read and write, she replied in the affirmative. I asked her if there was any way for her to learn, and was told that in the township they were running a literacy class. I then asked her why she did not join it, then she would be able to learn how to read and write. I was told that the classes were held during the day, and she had to work. All of these questions and responses were said in the presence of her employer. I watched the employer closely and gave her the opportunity to respond. She simply said, "Lots of black children brought up on the farms never went to school." I remembered her earlier remarks about how these black children on the farms had been her playmates, and by implication that they were her friends. This employer expressed no concern that her 'friends' did not have the opportunities that she has had in her life. As the employer, she had decided that she no longer needed a servant in a full-time capacity, and therefore had arranged for an alternative employer for her maid for the times she did not need her. Would it be so difficult for her to organise a little time for her to attend a literacy class? I had been told that her maid was like family and she loved her. If this relationship was more than an employer and employee relationship why did the employer not help her domestic

worker to read and write? Her maid had clearly stated in her presence that she wanted to, but the matter was passed over.

The use of maternalism in this context is in many instances a mask, which conceals exploitation. From the above interview, I interpreted that the domestic servant had no real comprehension of her true circumstances. Her second employer had doubled her working hours and then told her she could not pay her any more money for the extra hours worked. She was informed of this after her employer had taken her for a special 'treat' to a McDonald's Restaurant. The maid accepted her 'madam's' decision without question, and through a Xhosa interpreter told me that she was just happy that she had a job. I further went on to consider what would have been the possible outcome if this domestic servant did at some point learn to read and write. I came up with the following possible result: The maid may well feel she is now capable of more exacting work which will yield better pay and conditions. If her resignation was handed in the employer has lost her employee. Let us suppose that the servant is unable to find another job would she remain tractable and willing if she now resented the work she was engaged in? Would she agree to a doubling of her working hours without an equivalent increase in salary? The employer's maternal role may not be to encourage the growth of the child, but rather to ensure that the child does not grow and demand more in terms of the employment relationship.

For all of the above reasons, I decided that modification to the term maternalism was required. To describe familial ideology in my research findings I will use the modification - 'pseudo-maternalism'. This term will therefore be used from this point on in the thesis. My definition of the term being, 'a female relationship that is patterned along paternalistic lines that inverts characteristics of maternalism to enhance the power and image of self in relation to 'the other'.

(v) Conclusion:

In summary and conclusion, my purpose is to discover if the dismantling of apartheid has ameliorated the poor pay and conditions of domestic servants in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Furthermore, I situate these workers in the wider societal context in order to examine their 'quality of life' in addition to their 'quality of work'. Universal features of domestic service have been the depersonalising of the worker and the denial of their adulthood to that of a child. Enriching the data with consideration of some of the life details of the domestic servants interviewed will challenge these lingering social practices. It will also give the opportunity for the women I interviewed to 'speak for themselves'. Having argued through the thesis that domestic servants are often social constructed, caricatured and 'trapped' into being the 'other', their words will be the reaffirmation of their status as human beings in their own right.

Grahamstown was the deliberate choice for the research site, as this was also the site of Cock's (1989/79) study. To return to an original area of investigation was imperative as within the remit of the research questions being asked was a comparison of domestic service during and after apartheid. Regionalism is a significant factor that has to be recognised, as these wider societal influences will affect this sector of employment in specific ways. The possible distortions are minimised if the same region is considered in both studies. To aid the comparative process even further I replicated Cock's methodology in that a semi-structured format was used in the interviews conducted. Some of her original questions were also utilised in my interview schedules. (These are indicated in Appendix 1). The major departure from her methodology was that I did not use a representative sample, and conducted all of the interviews myself.

Overt racism has been challenged by the removal of apartheid, however it cannot be assumed that racial prejudices have been completely erased from the social practices of the South African society. The historical legacies of slavery and colonialism predate apartheid and as such some of their social practices may have been assimilated into common usage and their implicit racial orientation not acknowledged by societal members. Ironically, the practice of treating the employee, irrespective of their age, in a maternal way was perceived as an act of benevolence rather than a racial practice by many of the employers I interviewed. I therefore moved the methodology into a qualitative approach in order to explore the subtler nuances of interrelationships between races. The methodology is supported by deeper theoretical arguments than thought necessary by Cock. As earlier indicated, these have been briefly outlined here in the Introduction and will be examined in depth in the Literature Review.

Racism has undoubtedly been a supreme divisor in South African society. However, it is not the only factor that is of significance in domestic service. Gender and class inequalities are also relevant. Ideologies of difference feed on power inequalities, and these are not exclusively situated in racial relationships. Both class and gender inequalities therefore are the breeding grounds for both ideological and material subordination and exploitation. In addition to interviewing white employers I therefore sought out madams of non-white backgrounds in order to ascertain if class differentials in particular are gaining in momentum as a vehicle for the continual exploitation of domestic workers. In an article in *The Economist* (24 Feb 2001) survey data indicates that there are some encouraging shifts in wealth distribution. However, it is too early to determine whether Prime Minister Mbeki's strategy to combat 'the legacy of racism' by the creation of a 'black bourgeoisie' is succeeding,

In 1970, whites had 71% of personal income in South Africa, blacks had 20%. By 1994 the white share had fallen to 54% and the black share had risen to 33% and the trend has continued. Moreover the richest tenth of the population, which was 95% white in 1975, by 1996 was 22% black, 7% Coloured and 5% Indian. [...] all this merely goes to show that the trend is towards greater black prosperity (The Economist: 2001).

A burgeoning black middle class will undoubtedly see a rise in their demand for domestic servants. Protective labour legislation is difficult to implement in this sector of employment, as the work environment is also a private domain. The employer therefore has the legal right to privacy whereas the employee has protective legal expectations and redress in respect of their conditions of employment. This clear conflict of interest, together with the atomised nature of the employment, act together to compound the vulnerability of domestic workers to exploitative practices by their employers. These above reasons were major influences in the decision to explore the effects of the dismantling of apartheid in the context of domestic service. As domestic workers are so marginalised and unprotected, any improvements in their working lives of domestic servants would be an encouraging sign that the working lives of black South African women per se are improving. Equally, for the above reasons, the dynamics of class interrelationships in the setting of domestic service are stark. Stripped of checks and balances because of the closure of the domestic sphere to wider societal view, middle class employers will have relative autonomy in their treatment of their working class servants. Therefore, domestic service is also a supreme site to discover if class inequalities are replacing racial inequalities as the means to exploit and oppress the vulnerable in South African society.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The official South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission website states that the Commission is based on the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No 34, 1995. Mr Dullah Omar, a former Minister of Justice, remarks were reiterated by the Commission on its official declaration via the website, '[...] a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation.' The Commission is far from a white 'witch hunt' as many blacks, including Winnie Mandela, have been asked to stand before it and account for their actions during the apartheid years. However, what is clear is the fact that one of the major objectives of this body is to aid South Africa move from the 'morass' of racism. Perhaps it could be argued that in the setting up of such a Commission there was the recognition that the dismantling of apartheid does not rest solely on the removal of political structures; its social practices might still linger. If there is a legacy of such social practices, the racial prejudices that underpin them may be couched in such terms as to disguise their racial orientation. For example, as explored in my conceptualisation of 'pseudo-maternalism' in the Introduction, through the idiom of kindness the racial parent and child differential between the employer and her servant is maintained.

It is presumptuous to assume that racism has been completely removed from the social framework of South Africa. Therefore, in this chapter I will consider racism as an independent topic for investigation. As earlier indicated, this is a departure from Cock's theoretical orientation in her original research. As apartheid was such a blatant racial imposition, she did not feel the need to explore the subtler racial prejudices. These, as I have explained in the Introduction, were no longer openly

expressed, but were persisting in the white expressions of ‘cultural’ differences’. The second section of the Literature Review will therefore consider the theoretical hidden meanings of the domestic service relationship. (An overview of some of these theoretical themes to this section has already been set out in the Introduction). The third section of the Literature Review will consider the implications of applying Hegelian concepts to the domestic service relationship. I argue that the outcome is the multiplicity of ‘other’ relationships, which I entitle ‘the chains of otherness’. The basis of the argument is the fact that none of us, including servants, have singular relationships and as such are in reciprocal struggle for the realisation of self in different relationships and contexts. In the Comparative and Global chapter domestic service in Tanzania and Zambia are examined. Significantly in these two respective countries, domestic workers are predominantly male. This adds yet further strands to my conception of ‘chains of otherness’ as the male servant is both the designator of ‘otherness’ and the ‘other’.

Cock’s analysis of racism was addressed firstly, by her examination of apartheid’s effects on the domestic service relationship and secondly, in the feminist context.

Indeed the opening remarks of her book make the following statement:

The situation of black and white women in South Africa presents a challenge to any oversimplified feminist notion of ‘sisterhood’. That situation is sharpest in the situation of domestic service where the wages paid and the hours of work exacted by white ‘madams’ from their black ‘maids’ suggest a measure of oppression of women by women (Cock 1989/1979: 1).

Like Cock, I will consider apartheid’s effects as a racial imposition, but this will not be done as part of the Literature Review. The focus of the research question itself, that is, examining the evidence to assess if the working lives of domestic workers have improved with the removal of apartheid, will incorporate an examination of apartheid’s effects on domestic service. This chapter in its fourth section will emulate

her second remit, that is, will also consider racial differences within a feminist framework. Moving beyond Cock's feminist analysis I will discuss feminism's conceptualisation of gender differentiality as a social construct rather than being 'natural' and how this has influenced the domestic service relationship. In addition, the feminist notion of 'embodied labour' as a counterpoise to the Marxist notion of 'abstract labour' produced through the mechanisms of capitalism will be considered.

Cock did not focus exclusively on the lack of racial perceptions in the feminist perspective, she also explored the then prevalent domestic labour debates and the subordination of all women, white or black, to patriarchy. The domestic labour arguments, by the very nature of their remit, brought on to the agenda Marxist precepts and conceptions. For example, Cock explored Marxist analysis of use-value and surplus-value of labour, and the reproduction and production of labour power. I do not propose to 'retread' the domestic labour arguments in any detail. Like Anderson, I believe that the domestic labour debates were a major preoccupation of Marxist-feminism in the 1970s and there is little more to add, any further analysis/discussion would be a repetition of what has already been discussed (Anderson, 2000: 12). What is noteworthy is the fact that Cock did not explore race in relationship to class. With the removal of enforced racial barriers, this undoubtedly will accentuate the tensions between race and class. In the fifth section of this chapter, I will discuss Marxist class analysis in relation to domestic service with an emphasis on the implications of race in class stratification.

(i) Racism and its implications for domestic service:

In her 1997 Reith Lecture the American lawyer Patricia Williams's address was entitled, 'Seeing a colour-blind future.' Many of the sentiments expressed were crystallised from her much earlier book *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991). Her

words in both contexts, although primarily drawing attention to the universal persistence of racism, are appropriate and pertinent for South Africa as it strives to move forward from its apartheid years. She states the following:

[...] I do embrace colour-blindness as a legitimate hope for the future, I worry that we tend to enshrine the notion with a kind of utopianism whose naivety will ensure its elusiveness. [...] I believe that racism's hardy persistence and immense adaptability are sustained by a habit of human imagination, defective rhetoric and hidden licence (Williams, 1997: 3, 14).

Williams (1997: 3) summarises her point by arguing that the idealism of 'I think therefore it is' is a serious impediment to the social practices of racism being overcome. This does not mean to imply that South Africa is beset with naïve idealists whose main efforts to combat racism are desires rather than concrete actions. Comments such as those made by Williams are useful for them and us in recognising the longevity of the problem of racism and reaffirming the fact, that strategies to oust racial practices must be long term in nature.

Racism has many faces and is an ideology that is entrenched and embedded in many societies. Particularly those countries with a history of slavery or colonial imposition seem to 'naturalise' their racial prejudices. For example, to quote Williams (1997: 72) once more, 'Racism is a gaze that insists upon the power to make others conform, to perform endlessly in the prison of prior expectation, circling repetitively back upon the expired utility of the entirely known'. Although Williams is describing the racist 'gaze' her description is equally applicable to the 'gaze' of slavery or colonialism. Therefore, in this aspect of racism, slavery and colonialism are similar, their dominance making possible the circumscription of the actions of the subservient. Perhaps it is not too extreme to argue that those countries with a long slavery or colonial legacy although outwardly moving from their respective pasts may have accepted some of the norms and values of the social practices of their history. The social actors

do not acknowledge the racist prejudices that underpin these types of practices, as they are perceived as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ behaviours because of the simple fact that they have been replicated through the generations. Paternalism, and in this research, ‘pseudo-maternalism’, are both powerful examples of this point.

Grahamstown has deep roots in colonialism³, and therefore has a pre-apartheid legacy of racism. Racism, from my observations, seemed to be imbuing some of the social practices of the inhabitants of the town because of two major factors. Firstly, having distanced themselves from the apartheid system, that is, stating it was a state imposed institution this denies a personal involvement with racial impositions. Secondly, as paternalistic behaviour predates apartheid it was not perceived as a racial practice. Paradoxically parental ideology was often cited as evidence that racism was being eradicated from the interactions between races. To summarise the perceptions, apartheid’s emphatic segregation of races was understood to be enacted racialism. The general populace of South Africa could not stop this, as apartheid was a political structure with unavoidable social consequences. Colonialism on the other hand, gave the opportunity to the uncivilised, the savage to become like ‘me’. Therefore, colonialism was not recognised as a racialistic enterprise but rather a benevolent mission.

What is lacking in Williams’s Reith lecture and *The Alchemy of Race* is any serious examination of why racism is persisting and reformulating itself in different cultural

³ The following extract from my interview notes illustrates Grahamstown’s colonial heritage.

My immediate impression of Grahamstown was its historicity, the buildings all seemed to have a colonial stamp and evoked images of the glory days of the British Empire. Many of the white residents of the town had a strong allegiance to Britain. Many of them could trace their ancestors back to the 1820s British Settlers, even to details of which families had assisted passage over and which did not! I realised extremely quickly that Cock’s (1989/1979: 168) assertion twenty years ago that this was colonial country still held true.

contexts. Utopianism may be a reason for the impotence of those wishing to remove it from societal practices but is an inadequate explanation as to what motivates the propagators of racial acts and behaviour. The institutions of slavery and colonialism are useful as they explain a prevalent human characteristic of the need to justify action irrespective of how untenable that action may be. For example, Genovese (1976: 91) makes the following point in respect of slavery, 'Slaveholders could deny to themselves that they caused suffering through asserting their domination liberated the slaves from a more deprived existence'.

It is impossible to ascertain whether justifications for actions, then and now, were heartfelt or merely platitudes to others in the social group. However, what is certain is the need to make actions acceptable in the wider societal group. For instance, taking the extreme example of Hitler's 'final solution', before the extermination process of six million Jews commenced, they were denied German citizenship and then demonised to 'lice' that had to be eradicated. This example adds another twist to the justification process - gross acts of inhumanity justified through dehumanisation of the victim. Moving this into the domestic service context dehumanisation of the black servant will occur to various degrees. In a sense, treating an adult as a child is an act of dehumanisation as the status of adulthood is removed because of race or class. Long hours, poor pay and conditions, lack of recognition of the servants' familial obligations, are also evidence of negation of the servant's humanity.

To summarise the points so far, racism will persist if its acts can be justified and made socially acceptable. Martin Barker's (1982: 4) *The New Racism* is useful as he makes the salient observation that language is often used to disguise racial prejudices and justify racial social actions. He states:

It is a contention of this book that the prevalence of a definition of racism in terms of superiority/inferiority has helped conceal how common is a form of racism that does not need to make such assertions – indeed, can make a positive virtue out of not making them. It is indeed a myth about the past that racism has generally been of the superiority/ inferiority kind.

Apartheid's justification was not exclusively white supremacy but rather the right to racial separation in order to maintain and preserve cultural identity. It is therefore easier to make racial actions more acceptable if they couched in terms of difference rather than superiority. The language of difference quickly reveals its racial orientation, as within the notion is the fact that your difference is to your detriment, as you are not like me.

Barker was writing about racism in Britain in the 1970s with focus on the 'genuine fears' of being a host nation to an influx of ethnic immigrants. He examined the racially motivated speeches and policies of the day. For example, he quotes (1982:13) from a speech by William Whitelaw in a parliamentary debate on 5 July 1976:

Over the years, Britain has been an absorbent society, welcoming all comers and in due course assimilating them into our way of life [...] However, we all know that the principles of the fair and tolerant society which we seek to uphold will be undermined if individual fears and resentments are allowed to grow.

Assimilation is a key word, which Barker explores in detail, and adds to our understanding of the subtleties of racism. He argues that the onus was placed on the immigrants to assimilate into the host society. It is you not I who is racially prejudiced if you refuse to adopt the 'characteristic life-style' of me (Barker, 1982: 17). Difference is removed when you mimic me and the way I live. Implicitly there is the conception that my difference to you is indicative of my superior way of life.

Returning to the South African context, but using similar arguments, it could be said that black Africa was host to the then white immigrants (the colonisers). The whites as the minority group should therefore have assimilated and adopted the culture of the majority, who were of course black people. To reiterate earlier points, the 'civilising mission' of the colonial enterprise was totally at variance with the above scenario, not only did the colonisers not assimilate indigenous cultures but also they actively sought to impose their own culture and way of life. The justifications being that their patterns for living were the 'right' way to live and set the standard for others to follow. Again, my difference whether I am in the majority or minority is one of superiority. As explained in my methodology, I deliberately sought various ethnic mixes between madams and maids, for example, Asian madam and black maid etc. Despite extensive search and enquiry, I did not find one white maid working for a black madam. All I spoke to were emphatic that no white woman in Grahamstown would work for a black employer as a domestic servant. This fact may be illustrative of persisting racism within the domestic service relationship in the area.

Racism manifested through difference is far more complex than a simple comparative exercise between cultures, which whites manipulate to assert their cultural supremacy. The act of construction of differences is shaped by racial prejudices. Said (1987:43), writing in reference to the Asian colonial experience, specifically examines the racialism of difference in his conceptualisation of 'Orientalism'. He states:

Orientalism imposed limits upon thought about the Orient. [...] For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them") [...] Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours.

Said (1987:8) concluded that 'strangeness' was constructed as that which we are not. Furthermore, the oriental is objectified to a 'ideal and unchanging abstraction'.

Difference thus becoming unbridgeable, as within it is a racial stereotyping of the 'other' which is fantasised rather than being centred on fact. Prakash further elaborates, and states the western perception was one of a 'sensuous, inscrutable, and wholly spiritual India' (Prakash, 1990: 391). From Orientalism we see two important characteristics of racial perceived differences – universality and passivity of the 'other'. What then are the implications for racism? Firstly, the racially different are caricatured into one body with common behaviour traits and characteristics. Secondly, these traits are perpetual irrespective of time and geographic location.

Slavery, colonialism and apartheid may well be condemned by many as abhorrent institutions, but what often is overlooked is the fact that the racial caricatures they engendered are persisting. For example, from accounts of slavery Genovese (1976: 334) states:

According to the slaveholders, especially the ladies, the house servants were insufferably lazy, incompetent, dishonest and impudent; even the best servants would periodically lapse into the impossible habits of the race (Genovese, 1976: 334).

Cock (1989/1979: 119) writing in the late 1970s noted similar sentiments from employers when describing the characteristics of their servants.

You can get so much out of them and no more.

They take no pride in their work.

Servants are treated too well. That's the trouble. They don't want to work.

[...] Some are filthy, lazy and unreliable [...]

Generalisations concerning behaviour and characteristic patterns maybe imbued with racial prejudices. The point is not whether someone is lazy, untrustworthy etc, but rather if these traits are attributed to race rather than the person themselves. An

important point to remember is the fact that a denial of individuality is also part of the dehumanisation process towards the 'other'.

If for a moment we consider the narratives of two novels, we learn even more about racially constructed differences. Ferdinand Oyono, the Cameroonian statesman and novelist, first novel *Houseboy* (1966) relates the story of a young houseboy Toundi living within the French community of Cameroon. The houseboy dares to 'gaze' at his employers. He sees his mistress not as someone to admire, that is, superior to him, but rather as a woman, whose adulterous actions brings disgrace to her husband. The mistress cannot tolerate his 'gaze' of knowing because of their racial differences. To be judged by someone of an inferior race was unacceptable. The mistress strives for his removal from the home, but it is the husband who when discovering his wife's infidelity dismisses him. Another servant explains why he has to leave, 'While you are about, the Commandant won't be able to forget [...] For him, you'll be [...] something like the eye of a witch that sees and knows [...] (Oyono, 1966: 100). Toundi at the conclusion of the story loses his life. In another more popular novel, *To Kill a Mocking-Bird*, Lee (1989) relates her story through the eyes of a small girl, Calpurnia, of how the child's father defended a black man against the charge of raping a young white woman in the American State of Alabama. The outcome of the trial is inevitable, irrespective of the clear innocence of the accused because, in the words of Reverend Sykes, 'I ain't ever seen any jury decided in favour of a coloured man over a white man [...]' he is convicted of the crime (Lee, 1989: 230). He too loses his life as he attempts to escape from his captors.

This is a crude synopsis of the books but there is sufficient information for the point. It is 'I' that determines difference that is, 'I gaze at you, I decide what I see, I will

judge you'. The privilege is not to be reciprocal, 'You cannot judge me as you are not my equal.' In any employment relationship there is a power differential but the personal nature of the domestic service relationship enables the employer to emphatically impose the terms of the relationship. Incorporating the previous point, the employer will make demands of the employee but will not feel an obligation to formalise the terms and conditions of employment. For example, although employers in this sector have a legal duty to have a contract of employment with their servants, only one of my interviewees had a contract or pension provision, and her employer was a college rather than a private household. Wages were increased, if at all, on an ad hoc basis as was hours of employment. This is not to argue that this type of exploitation is only possible because of racial difference between employer and servant, rather that the ideologies of racism facilitate the subordination of black domestic workers to the dictates of their employers. In sum, the power differential in this employment sector is more likely to be enhanced if the servant is of a different ethnic group to her employer.

(ii) Theoretical explanations of hidden meanings:

The previous sector of this chapter emphasised the fact that the affirmation of difference was fundamental to the ideologies of racial prejudices. What it did not consider is why this should be so. One starting point is to consider Hegel's conceptualisation of self in relation to others. Here we find some answers to why human beings often stress that which divides rather than unites us. Dallmayr (1993: 219) clarifies Hegel's Lordship/bondage discourse in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977). The explanation shows that our perception of self is conditioned by the 'recognition of the other; a recognition predicated on reciprocal struggle '. In simplistic terms, we are social beings whose self-perception is realised through the

eyes of others. This recognition is not a spontaneous response to us, but is so essential for our recognition of self that conflict ensues, as we demand from the weaker the acknowledgement we desire.

To become truly autonomous, the self realises that it has to be recognised as such by another self, which can only happen in a radical struggle in which life and death, being and nonbeing hang in the balance. In this struggle, the stronger party subdues the weaker party and forces the latter to labour as a slave, a bondsman, and to produce goods for the satisfaction of the master, or lord (Dallmayr, 1993: 67).

If we add the ingredient of difference, it becomes clear as to why it is fundamental to racial prejudices. In a sense, affirmation of my difference from you is my victory cry, the voice of supremacy in my success in recognition of self through you.

In the opening remarks of his book, *On Voluntary Servitude*, Rosen (1991:1) raises the question, 'Why do the many accept the rule of the few, even when it seems plainly against their interests to do so?' He answers his own question in a structuralist framework, reminiscent of Talcott Parson's systems' analysis. He argues that 'societies are systems' that produce a kind of consciousness that prevents societal members acting in their own interests. Rosen is telling us the outcome of numerous individual struggles but does not explain how the end result is achieved. Hegel's understanding of self adds the detail to Rosen's argument. The logistics of the power of the few in relation to the many clearly demonstrate that control is maintained not by physical force but by psychological domination. The bending of the will of the 'others' to mine has a twofold outcome, firstly, it is another means of recognising my consciousness of self through your surrender, and secondly, it ensures that my interests are met at the expense of yours. Domestic service with its personal intimacy

between employer and servant, its purchase of the 'personhood' of the servant⁴, its confirmation of race and class differences, is an ideal setting for the reciprocal struggle between self and the 'other'.

The difficulty with Hegel is that his theorising is philosophical in nature and therefore the initial impressions from the first reading of his work is a sense of abstract considerations rather than pragmatic realism. For example, Hegel seems to be implying that the dependence of the master on the labour of the slave results in 'creative freedom' for the slave.

In devoting himself to leisure and the consumption of goods, the master actually remains dependent on external objects and the labour of the bondsman: while the former only consumes and gratifies needs, the latter through labour creates or produces goods. In working and thereby postponing gratification [...] the bondsman discovers the potential for creative freedom (Dallmayr, 1996: 67).

Freedom within this Hegelian framework would appear to be a state of mind rather than a concrete experience. One's immediate response is to ask, for those domestic workers who suffer stark exploitation, such as long hours poor pay, maybe even sexual abuse, what difference does it make to their perception of their own position knowing that their employer depends on them? The exploitative material conditions so overwhelming that they take precedence over the psychological implications of the employment relationship. Freedom, because of my physical servitude, is what I do not have, and if you, my employer, are not free because of your dependence on me, what difference does it make to my own bondage?

The irony is that a deeper consideration of Hegel's analysis reveals a message of hope to the oppressed. It has to be remembered that the basis of consciousness of self is

⁴ As stated in the Introduction, domestic servants, as discovered in Rollins's research, are expected to dress and act in a certain manner, hence the notion of selling 'personhood' in the employment relationship.

achieved through reciprocal struggle. The master reliant on the slave becomes weaker and as such, there is a power shift in the relationship between the two protagonists. Unlike Marx who sees a change in production as essential for the worker to recover self and fulfilment, Hegel argues that the educative effect of work, even if that work is exploitative, is sufficient for the worker to manifest through the product of his labour his own 'meaning'. Work itself then is the liberator. Work is defined as 'desire held in check', which puts an immediate distance between the impulses of self – will and formative activity grounded in objective principles. The master is the slave to his appetites whilst the slave has the capacity of rational freedom (Arthur, 1983: 70). It could be argued that from Hegel there is the hope that for the oppressed there is the potential to become stronger. The point is that strength has to come initially from within ourselves because there is first a psychological struggle, before any physical conflict, which is fought within the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed. Implicitly Hegel is arguing that 'the other's' consciousness of self can also be achieved through the reciprocal struggle.

There is a salutary lesson to be learnt by considering the effects for the 'other' of the struggle for self-realisation. The 'other' is more than the outcome of social construction. He/she is a real being that experiences the outcome of being perceived as a social construction. Williams (1991: 168) relates the experience of attending an academic conference whose agenda was the social construction of race, gender and oppression. As she listens to the names of Hegel, Foucault and Adorno 'hurled' at one another she considered the implications for her.

I think my raciality is socially constructed, and I experience it as such.
 I feel my black self as an eddy of conflicted meanings – in which my self
 can get lost, in which agency and consent are tumbled in constant motion
 [...] Somewhere at the centre, my heart gets lost. I transfigure the un-
 desirability of my racial ambiguity into the necessity of deference, the
 accommodation of condescension. It is very powerful when I permit myself

to see all this. I shield myself from it wherever possible.

For many domestic servants their shields against his/her racial construction inevitably must be extremely thin. The intimacy, the daily reaffirmation of racial and class differences and the deferential manner expected all serve to compel the servant to see himself/herself through the 'gaze' of their employer.

Fanon (1993) in his *Black skin, white masks* considers the 'Negro question' in relation to Hegel and in doing so adds further detail to the 'other's' perspective. Fanon (1993:225) acknowledges that white ideologies of supremacy have left significant scars on the black psyche. 'The Negro, however sincere, is the slave of the past'. He (1993: 11) argues that the relationship between white and black is one of dual narcissism, with each of them sealed in their respective white and black skins. He concludes there is only one destiny for the black man and that is white. Whether or not we believe Fanon's conclusions are extreme, they are still pertinent to the domestic service relationship. If we consider the position of the black servant, he/she is faced on a daily basis with a white world which is not theirs. A white employer raised this issue with me when I interviewed her. She states:

[...] what I find amazing about black people, is that they come into a white person's household with all their paraphernalia. Their homes are not salubrious, but they accept ours. Her home [maid's] is not bad but it's not great either, yet she accepts.

This maid, at fifty-eight years of age, was having a bathroom installed in her home in the township. As she had been a domestic servant all of her adult life the numbers of white-owned bathrooms she has cleaned are innumerable, for the first time in her life she was to have her own bathroom to clean. We can easily assume that on a daily basis this black domestic worker and many like her, experiences constant reinforcement of the fact that she is not white. In sum, I live the way I live because I

am black, you live the way that you live because you are white. I see this on a daily basis, therefore on a daily basis I know that I am black.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1988:109) in her examination of domesticity within the Plantation household during the antebellum period adds a further dimension to the relationship between the employer and slave/servant. She analyses the effects of the mistress and slave relationship on the gender identities of both parties. This is far more complex than Hegel's reciprocal struggle formulation – the framework of the struggle had already been ascribed by patriarchal ideology. To clarify the point:

[...] discrete households constituted a microcosm of rural southern society, women's roles within those households approximated the roles assigned by the ideology [...] of southern society, although not necessarily in all details [...] Prevailing southern ideology emphasised ideal of the southern lady as gracious, fragile and deferential to the men upon whose protection she depended.

My self is therefore always a female self, which is circumscribed by what I am supposed to be. This has definite Hegelian overtones – am I right then to imply Hegel has neglected gender issues? If we substitute the 'other' for female in relation to the male, I am most certainly in error. In Hegelian terms, gender construction is the outcome of the reciprocal struggle between the sexes in which men gain supremacy. The dominant gaze is male and consciousness of masculinity is realised by constructed femininity.

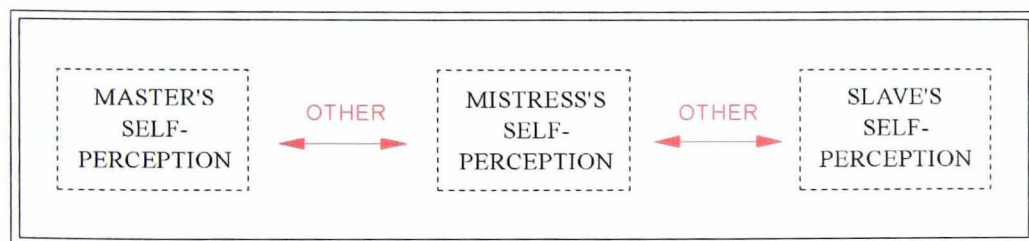
(iii) 'Chains of otherness' in the domestic service relationship:

As the mistress is the 'other' to the master, the slave is the 'other' to the mistress, all of which adds ultimately to the consciousness of self of the master. The relationships are founded on power inequalities and they in turn feed and maintain this power

differential. There is thus a synergistic interaction between each of the 'other' relationships, which reinforces existing ideologies of otherness and propagates the formation of new ones. The outcome is what I designate as 'chains of otherness' which work together to emphasise difference through the dialectic, that is, you are what I am not. In an endless series, the links of the chains are thus dialectical ones, as the other becomes the designator of otherness in the next link. The designation process itself is determined by the designator's own perception of being the other to the previous designator. In summary, in the link in the 'chains of otherness' I am the 'other' defined, constructed and depersonalised by the previous link, I in turn become the designator of 'otherness' in the next link. I now define, construct and depersonalise the following 'other'. Tracing the links back enhances the consciousness of the ultimate and master designator of 'otherness' status.

'Chains of otherness' in this simplistic form suggests a linear pattern. See Fig 1

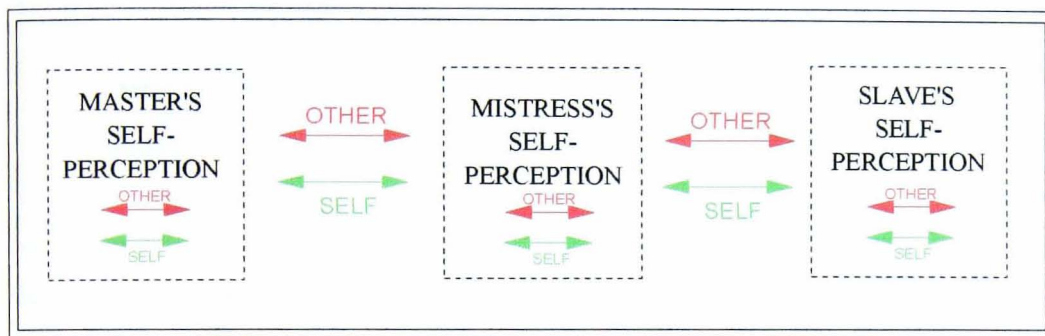
Fig 1 Linear model of 'chains of otherness':



However, as we are involved in a multiplicity of relationships we can therefore assume there are a variety and complexity of 'chains of otherness' that we are all involved in, and the outcome is proliferation within the linear progression. For example, Kristeva (1991:1) writing in the Jungian tradition, argues that within each of us is 'the hidden face of our identity', a foreigner which we detest in ourselves. The

'other' is within ourselves, which we reject. The model therefore needs to be modified as follows: See Fig 2.

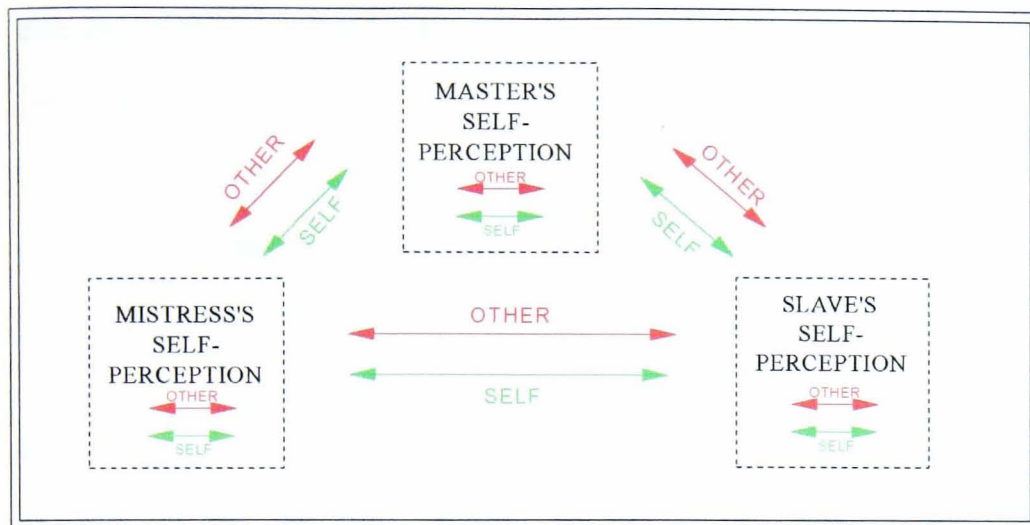
Fig 2 Linear model of 'chains of otherness' incorporating rejection of self:



It could now be argued that the mistress in rejecting domesticity through the slave's labour, is rejecting her own domestic role and relocating it in the person of the slave. The fact that the slave is of another ethnic origin reinforces the rejection process, justifies rejection through difference, hiding the fact that the other woman is herself. Moving the argument from slavery to domestic service, Anderson's study supports the point. Many of the employers she interviewed often referred to their domestic servants as 'substitutes'. 'The domestic worker is a double, the other self one leaves at home [...] (Anderson, 2000: 15).

There is yet a further point to consider. The models imply that the relationship of the master to the slave was realised exclusively through the intermediary mistress. This clearly is not so, there is a direct relationship with the slave which is intensified by the fact that she was simultaneously 'other' to the master because of her gender and her race. This duality of otherness results in a double burden of oppression. The linear model of 'other' relationships therefore needs to be reconstructed. See Fig 3.

Fig 3 'Chains of otherness' incorporating multiple relationships:



Fox-Genovese (1988 332) implicitly supports this multiple construction. She is in no doubt that slave women were well aware of the duality of their vulnerability.

There is a danger in insisting upon the specific experience of women as women: we can miss the determined struggle of the individual soul and consciousness against reduction to the status of thing. However deeply slave women themselves felt their exploitation and vulnerability as women, they also seem to have insisted, in the end, on their oppression as slaves.

From Fox-Genovese's assertions it can be deduced that in 'chains of otherness' they are not equally weighted in their subordination prowess. For example, 'As a slave woman and her master confronted each other, the trappings of gender slipped away. The woman faced him alone. She looked on naked power (Fox-Genovese. 1988: 374). Therefore, we can conclude that the physical structures of slavery are a witness of its supremacy as an ideology of the 'other'. My status as slave is the supreme expression of oppression, more so than being a woman in a male dominated society.

Joseph Conrad's (1993) famous African novel, *Heart of Darkness*, adds yet further dimensions to consider in 'chains of otherness'. Conrad simultaneously explores many levels of darkness, that is, the savage, the terrain, and the ultimate, death itself.

There is however another level of darkness, which is applicable to the discussion, a darkness within us. Marlow, the narrator in the story discussing Kurtz, states the following:

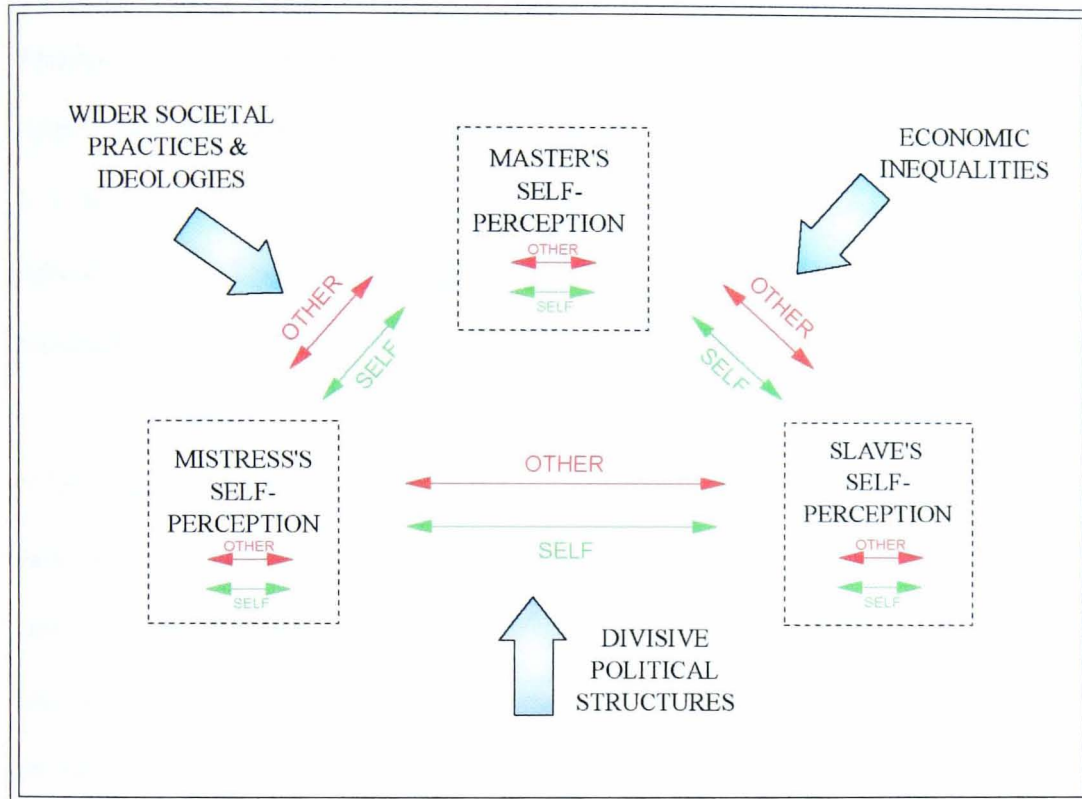
But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude – and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core [...] (Conrad, 1993: 64).

These were Marlow's words as he looked at shrunken heads on poles surrounding Kurtz's house. He realised that these were not 'ornamental but symbolic'. Kristeva raises the notion of rejection of the 'stranger' within us. Conrad suggests that within rejection there is a compelling attraction that draws us back into our own darkness, which we see in ourselves. The darkness is the savage within us. The 'other' then is not only rejected because they are part of ourselves that we do not want, but rather precisely because they represent our abyss of return. In saying they are not like me, I am really saying I am not like them. The 'chains of otherness' are also needed then to safeguard difference through the power differentials and deter the compulsion to be like the 'other'. This would confirm Rollins (1985) assertion that the dress and manner of the domestic servant was paramount in the relationship. Her difference had to be visible to reaffirm that the servant was not at all like the employer.

The discussion so far is implying that psychological victory of self is manifest through social structures – this is not strictly true. Social structures facilitate, empower and feed ideologies of 'otherness'. This occurs because the choices that are available to those cast in the role of the 'other' are curtailed by the structures of the system, that is, they are trapped into being the 'other'. The economic income differentials within the wider societal framework, together with divisive political

structures and social practices and ideologies beyond the boundaries of domestic service, all constrain the marginalised groups into their designated roles. See Fig 4.

Fig 4 'Chains of otherness' with their entrapping wider societal factors:



The following extract from my interview notes supports the fact that physical circumstances can seem to be impenetrable barriers to those subordinated to that of being the 'other'. (I was interviewing the four domestic workers who worked for Helen's domestic service agency rather than an individual employer).

I asked the women what facilities they had in their homes. All of them had electricity, but had an outside water tap and toilet. Each agreed that their homes were far too small with one room acting as living room, kitchen and bathroom. I asked them how the room was a bathroom. Maureen said, "We have to put a tin bath in there when we want a bath." I asked them if they found this difficult. Maureen then demonstrated the procedure of having a bath in a tin tub, and as she pretended to wash herself with a loofah, she continually looked over her shoulder with a mock fearful expression on her face in case anyone walked in on her. The others

nodded their heads in agreement and laughed until tears ran down their faces. Irene looked at me and said, “Oh yes, it is really like that for us. There is no privacy, you have to manage the best you can.” When the laughter had subsided, and Maureen had ceased her mimicry, she stated, “But it is not right that we live like this.” This for me was a telling comment, and demonstrated the pathos behind their laughter, their sense of fun there not because of them being oblivious of their true circumstances, but rather as a means of coping with them.

Perhaps we could rephrase the women’s sentiments. ‘I reject my position as the ‘other’, I live the position only because I have no choice.’ This is a simple point but it is a key one – there is a dynamic relationship between choice, vulnerability and subordination. The less alternative employment opportunities I have the more vulnerable I become and therefore more easily can I be exploited.

‘Chains of otherness’ are manifestations of power inequalities and struggles and as such, they are oppressing, exploitative and binding. The wider societal impositions strengthen the position of the designator and weaken the position of the designated. Moving the discussion from slavery to domestic service, despite the fact that many servants acknowledge their own impotence to combat exploitation, this does not mean to imply that they are passive victims. Scott argues that it is quite the contrary, that there are hidden forms of resistance, which may manifest itself in a public mask of deference, which hides a private face of disdain. Scott (1990:23) defines deference as follows:

[...] form of social interaction which occurs in situations involving the exercise of traditional authority [...] intended in some sense to convey the outward impression of conformity with standards sustained by superiors [...] the act may be performed almost automatically as a ritual or habitual act; it may be the result of calculating its advantages; it may be successful dissembling; it may spring from a conscious desire to honour a respected superior.

This Scott describes as the ‘public transcripts’ of behaviour of the subordinate whose deferential manner may have any of the above meanings. We cannot ascertain what

lies behind the deferential mask so therefore conjecture is our only option. Scott (1990: 3) further states that because the dominant suspects the sincerity of the public performance, ‘ it is a short step from such scepticism to the view, common among many [...] that those beneath them are deceitful, shamming and lying by nature’. If we extend Scott’s arguments a little further, the fact that the dominant see false deference as the result of the character deficiencies in the subordinate it could be interpreted that they believe real deference is their due.

The ‘hidden transcripts’ of resistance, according to Scott, are the inevitable response to the practice of domination. Furthermore, they are ‘the privileged site for non-hegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident, subversive discourse’ (Scott, 1990: 25). He concludes that the more vulnerable the oppressed the greater will be their show of deference but their hidden resistance will also increase significantly. Applying this to the conception of ‘chains of otherness’, the denser they are the more aware is the ‘other’ of their exploitation and resistance will be that much greater. ‘All of which is extremely compelling but there is a flaw – the dominated have to be certain of what they are resisting. The question is, is it the system or is it personal domination that they fight against? For example, Newby (1979: 369) in his research into the deference of farm workers made this pertinent observation:

He often feels dissatisfied with his own level of pay, for example, but does not in general put the blame for this upon his own, or even other employers: hence he tends not to question the legitimacy of their authority as a consequence. Indeed, it is a prevailing characteristic of agriculture that most workers feel economically deprived while remaining on excellent personal relations with their employers.

The decision to resist the system or the employer will depend on where the exploited perceives the power to oppress them being ubiquitous within the societal structures or centred in the person of the employer. Newby’s farm workers had made the decision that power was in the system and as such removed culpability from individual

employers. The truth of their assessment is not at issue, what is important is that they believed it to be so. The 'chains of otherness' then become invisible and the victim sees only the wider societal factors.

In the Introduction of the thesis, specifically in the section discussing theoretical challenges, I considered the impact of the kindness and power dynamic on the domestic service relationship. Newby does not indicate in any detail the personal relationship between the employers and farm workers, but does state the majority of relationships were good. Let us assume kindness was an integral component of them. It is extremely difficult to resist or resent the person who shows benevolence. It becomes an alluring option to blame wider societal forces, in doing so, the employer becomes your 'comrade-in-arms', as they too are victims of forces beyond their control. He/she stands at your side not in opposition, but bound by the chains that bind you. Not wishing to sound too cynical, perhaps these kind employers encourage their employees to challenge 'the system' rather than themselves by asserting their own 'powerlessness' in relationship to wider societal impositions. Acquiescence to the status quo is more easily maintained, as it is far more difficult to challenge a faceless enemy, that is, societal structures, than a personal oppressor.

In concluding this section of the Literature Review, it is important to specifically consider the idiom of power. It is the inequality of power that enables the construction of difference, the affirmation of self through the subordination of the 'other', the hegemony of the dominant to bend the will of the oppressed to act against his/her best interests and the perpetuation of exploitative practices through both time and different cultural contexts. It is power that forges the links of the 'chains of otherness'. Anderson differentiates between power in the pre-modern and the

modern settings. She states that power was personalised in the pre-modern era, openly acknowledged with overt actions to engender subordinates' dependency. For example, largesse by the power-holder as a means to increase obligation of the minions. Under capitalism, power is 'materialistic'; that is, relations of dependence are concealed as power is seen to be over commodities rather than persons. Anderson (2000: 6) concludes that migrant domestic workers are subject to both types of power.

In discussing the relationship between kindness and power, Anderson does not apply her notion of kindness to her conceptualisations of personalised and materialistic power. Kindness serves as a mask for personalised power to hide behind. The employer maintains control and fulfils his/her desires not by physical coercion but by emotional pressure. You are the 'other' but I care for you because you are the 'other'. Materialistic power implicitly hides behind market forces, the laissez-faire notion of the market being the decider holds sway. It allows employers to be the Pontius Pilot to their servants, washing their hands of responsibility because of the conditions of the market. The reason that power has to be disguised is this, if it is not seen it is difficult for it to be confronted and overcome. To return to my earlier remarks, it remains as the faceless enemy. I noted in my research that servants who had kind employers did not blame their employers for their pay and conditions. The workers talked about the 'system'. The system, on further enquiry was always vague, those responsible were officials somewhere but not Mandela or Mbeki, because these leaders were doing their best. Kindness, paradoxically is a binding force in the 'chains of otherness', as it encourages acquiescence rather than resistance, and is a means of subterfuge for the employer. The kindly employer can claim that they are powerless because of the wider societal forces when in fact they are empowered because of these societal factors.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power is not the same as Anderson's but it results in the same difficulties in challenging it. Sheridan (1994; 139) summarises Foucault's power perspective,

Power is exercised rather than possessed, [...] Power in that sense does not exist; what exists is an infinitely complex of micro – powers, or power relations that permeate every aspect of social life [...] it is multiple and ubiquitous.

Surveillance is an integral aspect of power with conscious and permanent visibility of those in the gaze of power. The watchers, by this definition, are agents of power instruments to the system. The personal intimacy of the domestic service relationship would seem to meet the criteria of this definition. Servants are closely supervised particularly if the employer is herself at home. For example, in one extreme case the servant I interviewed informed me that her employer would never let her sit down and would watch her closely to ensure this rule was not broken. However, the surveillance is a personal one and could be interpreted as evidence of power in the person rather than the system. To the abused servant her employer was a personal oppressor and her feelings towards her matched extremely closely Scott's explanation of hidden resistance.

Foucault's solution to combating 'micro-powers' is for collective action. Sheridan (1994:139) summarising his viewpoint once more states:

Because power is multiple and ubiquitous, the struggle against it must be localised [...] Struggle cannot be totalised - a single, centralised, hierarchised organisation setting out to seize a single, centralised, hierarchised power, but it can be serial, that is, in terms of horizontal lines between one point of struggle and another.

Irrespective of whether or not we perceive power relationships in domestic service in Foucauldian terms, this suggested strategy for combating power inequality is difficult to implement for domestic servants. By the very nature of their occupation they often

work in isolation from other domestic workers and therefore as a group find it difficult to form a cohesive strategy of action. The 'chains of otherness' that bind them are individual ones. Anderson noted in her European study the success of Kalayaan, an UK based group campaigning for the rights of domestic servants, but in Grahamstown not one of the domestic workers I interviewed was part of an organised group. To return to the earlier point, kindness by the employer diverts employees from challenging them to that of blaming the system. One alone is likely to be far too intimidated to challenge an unknown enemy. The next two sections of the chapter will review the feminist and Marxist hopes of female and class alliances as a means to challenge exploitative practices. However, we will see that this is not always an option for black women. Race is a divisive force hindering the uniting of women and achieving class solidarity, and as such increases these women's vulnerability.

(iv) Feminist theorising and its implications for domestic service:

Cock's arguments from 1979 that racial differences were a serious impediment to 'universal sisterhood' seem in the current era to be self-evident. This general acknowledgement of female racism is undoubtedly the outcome of close scrutiny of the discipline by earlier feminists such as Cock, Angelou, Walker, Spivak, to name just a few. Indeed the great strength of Cock's *Maids and Madams* was that it explicitly demonstrated in an empirical setting that women were active agents in the oppression of other women. The points I raised in the opening sections of this chapter in respect of racism, such as affirmation and construction of difference, legacies of slavery and colonialism and justification of oppressive acts through removal of status of the victim are pertinent in understanding why white women act the way they do to women of colour. I do not wish to reiterate the remarks, only to state that these

racially imbued prejudices clearly have and do take precedence over notions of female bonding.

Kristeva, in raising the notion of the 'other' being within us, implicitly is adding yet another challenge to the notion of 'universal sisterhood.' Moi (1986:9) describes Kristeva, in her relationship to feminism, as a 'somewhat critical fellow-traveller'. Perhaps one of the reasons for Moi's assessment is that having the 'other' within each of us offers a far more encompassing critique of female relationships than those defined by class and racial divisions. The potential for rejection of others is therefore within us all if we perceive in them the things that we abhor in ourselves. The implications for a feminist movement must be that difference between women can emerge as easily as their common purposes. As Kristeva (1991: 42) remarks:

[...] by explicitly, obviously, ostensibly occupying the place of the difference, the foreigner challenges both the identity of the group and his own – a challenge that few among us are apt to take up. A drastic challenge: "I am not like you". An intrusion: "Behave with me as you would among yourselves." A call of love: "Recognise me". In all that there is a mixture of humility and arrogance, suffering and domination, a feeling of having been wounded and being all powerful.

Kristeva is implicitly asking us to look beyond the obvious barriers to female unity. Yes, women have been divided by race and class, and undoubtedly still are, but there are other psychological perceptions that add to the complexities of difference.

One of the interesting developments in feminism is the notion of 'embodied' labour. The definition of such I am aligning with Rollin's 'personhood' notion, that is, demeanour, dress and manner being integral components of the domestic worker's labour. Before examining embodiment, we need to consider its relevance for arguments such as Kristeva's. The deference of servants to their employers are physical actions that demonstrates outward compliance to the role expected. The

uniform that many domestic workers wear is more than a functional garment to save their clothes from being sullied, but also a symbolic representation of the regulation of their constructed role. Perhaps employers are trying to distance themselves physically from their servants, as part of the rejection process of what their servants represent in themselves. "I am not like you - you do not act like me, you do not dress like me." Maintaining physical difference therefore is a manifestation of psychological rejection of what I do not want to be. However, ironically the labour of the servant is taken as a reflection of the employer's skills. For example, Anderson makes the point that the 'marvellous find's' hard work is to the credit of the employer as she employed her. Anderson (2000:21) describes this as 'personhood' being commodified. The advantage of employing a domestic worker of different ethnic origin is the fact that if her work is poor this is not defective judgement on the employer's part. The employer has the option to raise racial caricatures of character deficiencies in the servant to account for the poor performance.

Returning to Fox-Genovese, she argues that gender identity was constructed in the context of slavery, but could shift as a means of inflicting punishment and maintaining control. For example, black male slaves were made to dress in female clothes and wash clothes to demean them by the denial of their masculinity. Females were assigned to work gangs, the labour of which was seen totally unsuitable for any white woman (Fox-Genovese, 1988: 293). Underpinning these constructed gender roles were racialistic caricatures, this simultaneously demonstrated the power of white masters to impose identity and was a reaffirmation of difference through racial prejudice. 'Buck' was the reversal of the notion of cavalier and encoded white fears of black sexuality and virility. 'Sambo' suggested docility and subservience with implied laziness and indifference to freedom. 'Mammy' was the big black mother

who suckled and revered her white masters. 'Jezebel' was a sexual deviant whose promiscuity legitimised the wanton behaviour of white men (Fox-Genovese, 1988: 291-92). These racial names may no longer be used but the practices of racial and gender construction have not been erased.

Cock, (1989/1979:74) in her study noted the name changing of black women in the Eastern Cape area and cited it as evidence of the process of depersonalisation.

In Victorian England, servants were deliberately depersonalised and often called by standardised names, whatever their real names might be. In the Eastern Cape black women are generally called 'Sissy' which indicates something of the same depersonalisation mechanism at work.

This is fine as far as it goes but can be expanded to incorporate Fox-Genovese's points. Depersonalisation facilitates the implementation of racial caricatures and gender role constructions. Cock rectifies the omission herself as she quotes a little later the words of Memmi. 'The mark of the plural' is the outcome of depersonalisation and results in 'anonymous collectivity,' which in turn becomes the breeding ground of racial caricatures and gender impositions (Cock, 1989/1979: 117). If we take the argument a little further, there appears to be a synergistic relationship between depersonalisation and naturalisation. Depersonalisation makes possible the application of universality, if universality is applicable then this must indicate naturalness. These as yet are abstract concepts, but if they are applied into a specific context the argument becomes clearer. For example, in the context of gender construction, as a woman you are in the home, all women should be in the home, home is the natural place for women. Extremely crude and dated arguments but sufficient to draw out the relationship between depersonalisation and 'natural' arguments.

Cock goes on to relate that in her in-depth interviews those overall employers did not change the names of their domestic servants. However, the majority of them did not know the full names of their employees. Cock (1989/1979: 118) writes:

While the pattern of interaction between employers and their servants clearly varies a good deal, the employers' ignorance of their servants' lives and identities outside the work situation is surprising. This is especially so in view of the physical proximity of servant and employer in the workplace.

The servant is depersonalised on two counts, firstly because of her race and secondly because of her gender. Employers are able to justify their racial caricatures and prejudices through the depersonalisation of their employees, and to repeat the words of Anderson, substitute the servant in place of self in the home. It could be argued that a significant number of women have not explicitly rejected the notion that their 'natural' place is in the home. In employing another woman in the home, this could be interpreted, as ensuring their absence was more socially acceptable in that a woman performs these 'natural' female tasks. If we now reintroduce Kristeva's 'other' into the notion of self-conception, the contradiction becomes apparent. The domestic worker as substitute is simultaneously a representation of self and rejection of self. However, these contradictory implications for consciousness of self are masked by racial difference. The depersonalisation of the servant is the ground upon which the employer formulates her racial and gender constructions of the 'other' to her self.

It is not only the physical body that feminists examine in the labour process, but also the notion of 'emotional labour' as a commodity to be bought and sold in the market place. Hochschild (1983: 7) is a major proponent of this conception and defines 'emotional labour' as follows; ' [...] the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display: emotional labour is sold for a wage, and

therefore has exchange value'. Her subjects for the exploration of this conception were flight attendants in the American Airline Industry. However, the context of domestic service is equally valid for the exploration of 'emotional labour'. Hochschild (1983: 147) asserts that there are three criteria for its saleability. Firstly, there is a face-to-face interaction between the employee and the customer. Secondly, an emotional state can be achieved in the receiver, for example, gratitude. Finally, the employer can control the employee through training and supervision. The customer in domestic service is the employer herself, she therefore is in a position to monitor and demand personal 'emotional labour' from her servant. What is significant concerning 'emotional labour' is that the emotions for sale are predominantly female ones. In both airline stewardesses and domestic servants we see, caring, serving, nurturing, perhaps even mothering, on sale in the market place.

In many of my interviews with domestic service employers the responses to the question, 'what quality do you like best about your servant(s)?' were not related to work tasks set in the home. Servants' qualities as confidants, listeners, intimates, motherliness, nurturers were high on their lists. It is noteworthy that these lists of qualities are emotional characteristics rather than physical abilities. In the words of one employer:

Alvera is like my black mother. **[Alvera described the employer as being like her mother]**. You know I know the family.

Why is Alvera like your mother?

She is the sort of person I can say anything to, and as I said to her a few weeks ago, "You know, you're the only person I can talk to and know it doesn't go any further. You know you are teaching me something, because I am a bit of a blabber mouth". [...]

This specific employer was a single woman living alone and clearly needed an emotional service from her employee. I am not suggesting that these types of employment relationships are solely based on the marketability of emotion – this would be too simplistic. Unlike air-stewardesses, domestic servants often work for the same ‘customer’ for many years. Genuine feelings will therefore have had the opportunity to grow and develop. However, irrespective of this fact the ‘personability’ of the servant will be a significant factor in her saleability in the market place and her durability in a specific employment relationship. Labour is not therefore simply an abstract commodity in the market place. In these types of intimate employment relationships, the person is for sale and not just the tasks she can perform.

(v) Marxist class analysis and its impact on domestic service:

Williams (1991: 118) cites the case of black residents in New Jersey who decided against naming a street after Martin Luther King as a memorial. The reason against implementation of the plan was that it could have been construed that this was a black neighbourhood. A feared outcome was that whites would cease to live in the area and property prices would significantly drop. Williams describes this as the ‘black next door’ syndrome (Williams, 1997: 39). In my own research, I noted a similar phenomenon. As outlined in Appendix 2, as the townships have expanded closer to Grahamstown itself, the real estate prices on the outskirts of the town were plummeting. Whilst visiting an Asian employer of a domestic worker I was informed that the Asian community had during the apartheid era made ‘their own place’. As non-whites, they too were also excluded from white areas but did not want to be amidst the black communities in the townships. Together they had built their community apart from the town and the townships. (The homes I was shown round were palatial in design and décor). However, since apartheid’s demise black families

had relocated to the Asian chosen area. I was informed that Asian property prices had significantly dropped because of this black relocation.

These recorded incidents would seem to confirm Williams (1997: 39) assessment that there is no lower class than being black. This therefore has significant implications for class stratification in the South African context. Class boundaries are not the only barriers, which are cutting social structures. Within the classes themselves there are racial barriers that are significant deterrents to class solidarity and unity. For example, a white working class male may well feel superior to a black working class male based on the colour of skin. This was exacerbated in the South Africa by the fact that during apartheid, employment bars were in force in the work situation because of race. This to a certain extent justified racial perceptions of superiority by the imposition of work task inferiority. The following historical example, although taken from India rather than South Africa, illustrates the complexities of stratification when race and gender impact on class location.

In 1893 the Maharaja of Patiala married Miss Florry Bryan: this Disturbed Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. Not only did the marriage transgress against the social distances between Europeans and indigenous people mandated by imperial ideology, but the Maharaja's high social status and his wife's working-class background confused even more the racial, sexual and class hierarchies of empire (Strobel, 1991 379).

Genovese asserts that traditionally Marxism has been inadequate in situating race in class analysis. He, like Williams, perceives these omissions as the outcome of utopianism without empirical substance. Cock in focusing her attention on the then prevalent domestic labour debates also failed to consider racism in sufficient depth within a Marxist framework. Genovese (1971: 55) states the following:

Until recently, American Marxists like many others viewed racism as simply a class question. They regarded racial discrimination

as a “mask of privilege” a technique by which the ruling class exploits minorities and divides the working class. According to this view, capitalism generated slavery, and slavery generated racism; but the destruction of slavery did not end the economic exploitation of black people that racism justified and perpetuated. [...] The black working class did not and do not have identical class interests to their white counterparts.

If we step out of racial considerations for a moment into the arena of criminology Jock Young from a Left–Realism perspective also noted the Marxist tendency to utilise top–down arguments to explain exploitation of the working class in their unfair treatment by the justice system. He rhetorically asks that if the problem is the ‘discriminatory and stigmatising behaviour of the agencies of control’, why then do the poor prey upon the poor? It is the inner cities, the poor neighbourhoods who have the high incidence of crime (Young, 1991). Similarly, we can ask if racism is a strategy of bourgeoisie ideology why then do poor whites exploit poor blacks? As the opening section on racism in this chapter illustrated, the dynamics of racial difference are a major divisive force that often takes precedence over class location.

Van Onselen’s (1982) social and economic history of the Witwatersrand cites many examples that support the point. At the turn of the twentieth Century, many working class women employed servants. The outward appearance is one of unity between women. For example, the working class employer would work with her servants in the tasks within the domestic sphere. However, Van Onselen is quite clear, physical proximity does not negate difference. Racism with its ideological premises is still divisive even in these scenarios. The employer, although working class and fully participant in domestic work still felt superior through the difference of skin colour. Despite similar class locations, these employer and servant relationships reflect the earlier observation, that within the class structure there are racial divisions, which result in internal hierarchical barriers. These internal barriers are as dense and as

unbridgeable as those are between the classes themselves. Ironically, it was race that made it possible for the working class to employ servants, that is, black labour was extremely cheap to purchase, and it was the employing of servants that allowed the working class some upward social mobility. In a sense it could be argued that race for the black working class has meant entrenchment in the bottom sector of the class structure, whereas for the white working class race has allowed them upward mobility in the class structure. All of which reaffirms William's assertion, which has been earlier cited, that there is no lower class than being black.

In respect of the middle class, the racial barriers within its structure do not seem as emphatic or as impenetrable. One possible explanation is the white perception of the group. For example, a retired historian in Grahamstown, who herself was of English descent, discussed at length how important and beneficial to the country it was that Mbeki and others in leadership had had a Western education. Referring back to both Fanon and Williams, as they would argue, this could be interpreted as implying that being educated in the West was indicative of 'honorary white' status. Williams (1997: 33) asserts, 'Middleclassness [...] is so persistently a euphemism for whiteness' (Williams, 1997: 33). Implicitly the colonial mission is back on the agenda. If we remember that one of the articulations of colonialism was bringing civilisation to the uncivilised, or in other words, offering self as the standard, the notion of black middleclassness takes on subtler nuances. In this context, the black middle class being granted parallel white status is reflective not of black achievement but rather that of white. Therefore, a thriving black middle class could be viewed as a testament of the success of white colonialism. The Hegelian reciprocal notion of self and the 'other' is not diminished, as the 'other's' reflection of me is another witness of self. Irrespective of whether the Hegelian connotations are accepted, the

implications for Marxist class analysis are unquestionable. The respective legacies of slavery and colonialism have not simply been resonant in top-down class impositions, within the class structures themselves they have significantly impeded class solidarity.

Bujra's (2000: 36) Tanzanian study adds further strands to class analysis, which seem Marxist in orientation but moves beyond the parameters of this type of analysis. For example, she states:

Class is conceptualised here as the formation of relations of solidarity, exploitation and accumulation in the field of production, but it is also understood to be a vital and creative cultural process of performance and display.

Bujra (2000: 112) identifies two identifying factors of class phenomenon, which are firstly accumulation and secondly expressive consumption by the middle classes that employ servants. Bujra (2000: 128) argues that particularly during hard times servants became crucial in freeing the labour of women, that is, facilitating accumulation, who were able to help in shops and other small money-making schemes. Expressive consumption refers to the physical manifestation of status by the employing of servants.

Bujra (2000: 128) also notes that servants' labour is usurped for the accumulation process. Interestingly, Cock (1989/79: 110) comments on the involvement of domestic servants in the Home Industries Association. This was an association set up by the wives of farmers in the Grahamstown and Port Alfred area, where home produced goods were sold such as cakes, jams, handcraft products and fruit and vegetables. Cock's point is that the majority of the goods produced were from the labour of domestic servants. However, the example supports Bujra's later findings of servant involvement in accumulation. One of the issues in the domestic labour debate

was whether or not surplus–value was extracted from domestic service. Neither Bujra nor Cock comment on this in the context of the accumulation process. Although in the case of domestic service, there are arguments for and against surplus–value being taken from the servants’ labour, in schemes such as the Home Industries and accumulation projects mentioned by Bujra, it seems self evident that the surplus–value of the labour of domestic workers is emphatically taken. In my own research of 1999, I visited the thriving Home Industries shop in the centre of Grahmstown and it was confirmed that domestic workers still produce the bulk of the produce for sale, although it was their employers who were the shop assistants selling all of the goods.

Anderson (2000: 14) in her European research noted that the institution of domestic service was an integral part to the maintenance of the life-style of the middle classes. Implicitly she is acknowledging and expanding upon the notion of ‘expressive consumption’ as outlined by Bujra. She writes:

This aspect of domestic work [...] Particularly for the middle classes of the industrialised world [...] is bound up with the reproduction of life–style and crucially of status. Nobody has to have stripped pine floorboards, handwash–only silk shirts, ornaments that gather dust. All these things create domestic work, but they also affirm the status of the household, its class, [...].

The significant phrase is ‘reproduction of life–style’ which adds another level to the Marxist notion of reproduction of labour power from within the domestic sphere. Anderson et al bring to the discussion the recognition that social reproduction by its very nature widens the perimeters of class struggle from that of work to also include that of home. Home is not simply the site of reproduction of future proletarians it is also another means of extraction of surplus–value off the labourer, which in this case is the domestic workers. The domestic worker’s surplus–value is not realised in terms of increased profits for the employer, but rather it is the vehicle for the maintenance of

the material symbols of the class. Anderson (2000: 12) in addition, challenges the notion of reproduction of labour power itself. She makes the salient point that within the reproduction process of human beings, as well as being future labourers, they are also shaped beyond their economic utility to that of the social and the cultural. The outcome is that in any analysis of domestic work, 'who does it, when and where' is a vital part of its meaning.

If we apply Anderson's directive into the concept of reproduction of labour, the role/relationship of the childminder to child is of paramount importance in class analysis. The relationship between the two participants reaffirms and reinforces race and class positioning and distance. Having criticised Cock for neglecting the class and race dynamic, it is evident that regarding childcare she is extremely aware of the implications of them both. Her recognition of the seriousness of the impact of racial difference to class positioning in the childcare situation is demonstrated by the fact that she raises it as an issue in the opening pages of *Maids and Madams*:

Many white South African children are socialised into the dominant sociological order and learn the attitudes and styles of racial domination from relationships with servants, especially 'nannies'. The converse is equally true in that many black children experience the inequality of apartheid and the anger it generates through some experience of domestic service (Cock, 1989/1979: 3).

(Genovese and Fox-Genovese in both of their accounts of antebellum slavery also recognise and examine the effect of childcare on dominant ideologies). Whilst in Johannesburg during 1999 I had the opportunity to interview a prominent businessman in the area. Fondly he told me that his nanny was like a 'second mother' to him, and that because of his relationship to her, he had found employment within his factory for one of her sons. I asked him if he regarded her son as a brother. The answer was no. I asked him what job had he offered to her son. 'He sweeps the floors in the factory.' The contrast between the two men was acute, one held the

highest position in the company, the other the lowest. This example is indicative of the fact that within the childcare provision of domestic service race and class positioning are reinforced emphatically rather than realigned.

(vi) Conclusion:

To bring together an underpinning theme of the chapter, the reasons for maintenance of difference are compelling. To reiterate the Hegelian point, if consciousness of self is intimately related to the relationship to the 'other' perceptions of difference must be alluring as a bolster of self. Class solidarity can become less persuasive than the lure of recognition of difference because within the perimeters of difference, power over you is more easily attainable and overt than the power that comes by standing together. This fact is not only confined to racial difference. Lenin (1902) in his much-cited work, *What is to be Done?*, differentiates between trade union consciousness and social-democratic consciousness. It is important to acknowledge that he is writing in a specific context and period, that is, pre-revolutionary Russia, but his arguments have some relevance to the race and class relationship. The major thrust of his argument being that sectional interests, at that point in Russian history, were a serious impediment to proletarian unity. Furthermore, that they were a significant barrier to the working class becoming a class-in-itself, and therefore would not be able to move to become a class-for-itself. Hence, his assertions that a Vanguard, (the leaders, mainly taken from the intelligentsia), was needed to lead the working class to revolution. It could be argued that in Lenin's context that it was economic self-interest rather than perception of self which was the issue. However, irrespective of the underpinning causes, the point is that difference can and does seriously impede class solidarity formation.

These points are not intended to undermine the significance of racial ideologies in the domestic service relationship. As discussed in my conception of 'chains of otherness' the links are forged through power differentials. The links in the chains are also not equally weighted, as some dialectical relationships are more emphatic than others. For example, the slave woman was doubly burdened not only because of her gender and race, but also because she had separate relationships with master and mistress. Racial prejudices are major contributors to 'chains of otherness', as in addition to being sites of difference in their own right, they act as facilitators for other difference perceptions to flourish. To reiterate Kristeva's arguments, as we reject part of ourselves, ethnic differences disguise the fact that in the 'other' woman I see part of me that I do not want to be. Racial differences maximise the social distance in the domestic service relationship and therefore the process of depersonalisation of the servant is that much easier.

There is an inherent contradiction in the domestic service relationship. On the one hand, the servant is depersonalised and on the other, their 'personhood' is fundamental to their domestic service employment. To summarise the points in respect of depersonalisation; this occurs when a servant's characteristics and behaviour are put into a universal framework. His/her individuality is categorised as reflective of the characteristics of the wider group. For example, a servant who is criticised for laziness and incompetence, irrespective of whether this is true or not, may well have this explained as 'typical' of their race, gender or class. Similarly, paternalistic and maternalistic practices erode the status of a servant. In denial of their adulthood to that of child this in effect strips away some of their 'personhood'. The notion of 'personhood' is founded on Rollins (1985) assertion that the dress, demeanour and perceived personality of servants were decisive factors in employers'

decisions to employ them. The outcome of the contradiction is that employers' simultaneously socially construct their servants, but at the same time demand an embodiment of their labour. For example, their personal qualities such as deference, acquiescence and obedience together with their roles as confidants, carer and nurturer are high on the list of employers' requirements. The employer's position is unassailable, as 'bad' servants are inevitable because of their racial, class or gender characteristics. The 'good' servant who has a 'personality' which meets the requirements of the employer enhances the employer's own persona. Having 'good' servants is an affirmation of the employer's ability in finding them. The failures of servant are outside the employer's control, servants' successes are indicative of their success in managing the affairs of the home.

To exert and maintain control of the domestic service relationship, employers use power inequality and ideologies of difference in tandem. The relationship between them is a complex one, as not only do they reinforce each other but they are also a means of disguising one another. Through the idiom of power the employer can exploit their servants and justify their actions on the grounds of ideological differences. Similarly, because you are inferior and incapable of being like me I am justified in exercising control over you, because this is for your ultimate benefit. Racism is the supreme vehicle for the enactment of the power and difference dynamic but it is not an exclusive site. Inequalities, such as gender and class, are also fertile ground for the power differential and ideological supremacy to be played out.

Although arguing that power is in a synergistic relationship with difference ideologies, this is not to dismiss its other mediums. As stated in both the Introduction and this chapter, kindness is also a means of enhancing the power of the employer.

Anderson and Newby specifically address this interlinkage between them. Kindness masks the ‘chains of otherness’ and in doing so disguises the power inequalities within domestic service. Domestic servants, because of their kindly employer, mistakenly assume that power rests solely in the wider society and not with their employer. Power is depersonalised, faceless and ubiquitous. The ‘system’ is responsible, and is exercised against their employer as well as them. ‘My employer cannot pay me any more, they can’t afford it.’ This may well be true, but to assume that the employer is as powerless to act is a fallacious assumption. Employers could easily reduce hours of employment and pay the same wages as before. The ratio of hours worked to pay is immediately increased. The only cost to the employer is fewer hours worked by the servant.

The reverse is actually true in respect of wider societal forces. They have the façade of curtailing employers’ power, but in reality, they enhance it. The employer can argue that ‘because of factors beyond my control’ I treat you the way I do. The outcome therefore is another opportunity to justify exploitable practices because the onus is placed outside the domestic service relationship. The significant point, which the next chapter will address, is that income differentials within the societal group are major influencing factors in the domestic service relationship. Economic inequalities are the foundation for both power and ideological formations. The problem is that these economic divisors are also obscured and justified by the ideologies of difference. To return to the earlier remarks of the conclusion, difference is very appealing, as within it is the opportunity to realise self at the expense of others. Universality arguments have been manipulated to deny individuality. Conversely, universality is a means of recognising commonalities over differences. In the famous words of Marx (1985/1888: 120–121), ‘The proletarians have nothing to lose but their

chains'; he was advocating class alliance to overcome material exploitation. The difficulty as earlier intimated, is that race and gender inequalities within the class structure are further barriers to class solidarity. Black female domestic servants are relatively easy targets to be exploited as they usually stand alone as atomised, marginalised and unprotected workers.

CHAPTER 2: COMPARATIVE AND GLOBAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter, five additional studies to that of Cock's will be considered. The emphasis will be to utilise these additional studies to add depth and additional insights to Cock's and my own research and to ascertain if there are any common patterns of domestic service employment which transcend national boundaries. Bujra (2000: 37) makes the salient point that this 'old' institution is persisting in 'new' settings. She lists some of the 'new and contradictory demands' that domestic service responds to. For example, female employers' struggle to meet their domestic responsibilities, dramatic fluctuations in supply and gendered conceptualisation of labour. In addition, countries such as South Africa are a supreme example that political systems may dramatically change but domestic service is not impeded in its persistence and growth. As domestic service has historical roots in both slavery and colonialism this would seem contrary to expectations. Witnessing the reach of capitalism advancing through increased opportunities in the global markets one would expect the outcome to be the decline in the institution of domestic service, as alternative employment opportunities may become available for domestic workers.. The questions of its durability, adaptability and versatility are therefore extremely significant. The chapter will conclude by considering the evidence from the literature studied to find some of the answers.

The studies that will be examined are Anderson's European, Bujra's Tanzanian, Hansen's Zambian, Palmer's American and Srinivas's cross-cultural perspectives. Anderson in her European study specifically compares her work to that of Cock's. In her opinion, the punitive legislation that has restricted the movement of immigrant domestic workers has resulted in many similar exploitative outcomes to those experienced by South African domestic workers under apartheid. Both Bujra and

Hansen present an African comparison to that of Cock. Cock considered other South African experiences of domestic service, such as Preston–Whytes (1976) study of Durban, but as stated earlier, external African experiences of domestic service were not examined in her original research. In both the Tanzanian and Zambian context the sector has been predominantly male and as such offers important insights to gender relationships within domestic service. Bujra (2000, 43-44) for example, has argued that there has been an erroneous assumption that domestic service has been a predominantly female occupation because it has been presumed to be an extension of female domestic duties in the home. However, in many parts of Africa and in certain parts of Asia the majority of domestic servants have been male.

Hansen brings to the forum of discussion sexuality as one of the determining features of the domestic service relationship. Van Onselen (1982) documents the ‘black peril’, that is, the perceived white paranoia in respect of black male sexuality in his historical account of South Africa’s Witwatersrand. His study also demonstrates the fact that irrespective of their feared carnality, male servants were common in this sector of employment. This is at complete variance with Cock’s 1979 findings, as not only is domestic service a feminised occupation but sexuality is not raised as an issue. This is by no means a criticism of Cock, as the apartheid regime with its emphatic sexual segregation laws made it extremely difficult for victims of abuse to vocalise their experiences. I also in my own fieldwork found no evidence of overt sexual impropriety in the domestic service relationship. Indeed, as stated in the Introduction, the relationship was feminised in that the female employer dictated the terms of employment with her female domestic servant. In addition, as my sample is focused on older domestic workers their sexuality in the workplace was not an issue. Undoubtedly sexual abuse of servants did and does occur but will not be addressed in

the presentation and discussion of my research findings⁵. Hansen therefore adds nuances to the examination of domestic service not present in either Cock or my own research.

Palmer's American research in the early years of the nineteenth Century is useful in that it is a benchmark to measure many of the enduring features of domestic service. Her work also reaffirms many of the theoretical considerations of the thesis. A major thrust of the theoretical arguments has been that many of the practices of the domestic service relationship are the products of the legacies of slavery and colonialism. Palmer's findings offer compelling evidence to support these assertions. Srinivas in considering the master/servant relationship in broader terms than within national boundaries offers insights into global trends and patterns in this sector of employment. These last two perspectives will be examined in conjunction with one to another in order to ascertain if any of the patterns and trends that do transcend nation states are also features that have longevity.

(i) Anderson's European Study:

Discussed in the literature review was the fact that countries with a legacy of colonialism have carried through many of their social practices from this period of their histories into the domestic service relationship. Srinivas (1995: 269), in her own review of recent literature in respect of domestic service, highlights one of the recurring questions and themes surrounding it, that is, will it disappear as economic development and industrialisation progresses? By implication, both these points seem to suggest that domestic service may well be an anachronism in the global markets.

⁵ Labour sociologist Peter Rachleff on a visit to South Africa January 2000 relates how groups of domestic workers in both Cape Town and East London are coming together to discuss their experiences including rape and other sexual abuses. This is a clear indicator that domestic servants have and are being sexually exploited and therefore Hansen's findings in respect of black sexuality are pertinent to the discussion.

Neither Srinivas nor Anderson put forward any evidence to support the view that domestic service is declining. Bujra (2000: 5) in the Tanzanian context, noted that even during the period 1967–1980s when the government espoused determination to produce ‘egalitarian socialism’ with the ultimate aim to curtail class divisions the demand for domestic servants did not diminish. Bujra’s point was that irrespective of political structures and philosophies domestic service is an enduring occupation. Anderson utilises figures from the 1997 UK Mintel Survey to illustrate quite the opposite, that domestic service is increasing. In the period 1987–1996 the Mintel Survey claimed that the amount spent in the UK had quadrupled rising from £1.1 bil to £4.3 bil. The reasons suggested are that women are now working in ever increasing numbers, the availability of extended families within the vicinity to look after dependants are diminishing and many middle income families are ‘cash-rich time poor’ (Anderson, 2000: 56).

Lack of time is not the only contributing factor in the growth in dependence on domestic workers. Both childcare and care of the elderly are still primarily a female responsibility and there are strong indicators that these are being significantly shifted to domestic employees. Europe is experiencing an ever-increasing ageing population, which is not matched by state support and provision. Anderson’s study in five European cities, (Athens, Barcelona, Bologna, Berlin and Paris), clearly indicated a growing trend of using domestic workers as a cheap means of child and elderly care. This is not dissimilar to Cock’s 1979 study where childcare was integral to the domestic servants duties, as was meeting the dependency needs of elderly employers.

The crux of the matter is that in purchasing the ‘personhood’ of the servant care itself becomes commodified. Anderson not only raises this as an issue, but also explores

the class and racial implications of care provision. In doing so, Anderson addresses an earlier criticism targeting feminist analysis. For example, Graham writes (1991: 65),

Feminist analyses have yet to explore the conceptual distinction between the location and social relations of care: between where the care is carried out and the social relations that determine who gives and who gets care. The result is a mode of analysis which obscures forms of home-based care that are not based on marriage and kinship.

Graham (1991: 74) is asserting that feminism has focused heavily on the analysis of care as a vehicle, which facilitates the construction of gender identities. This, she believes, is inadequate as it neglects the important fact that in commodified care class and racial identities are also ‘constructed, integrated and lived out’. Anderson, therefore in exploring the nuances of care in gender, race and class terms redresses these feminist omissions.

It is important to remember that Anderson’s study is retrospective to Graham’s evaluation and therefore is only able to demonstrate the fact that feminist theorising is becoming wider in its remit and moving beyond gender preoccupations. However Anderson, because of the timeframe, cannot challenge the validity of Graham’s initial claims in respect of feminist analysis in the early 1990s. Cock’s 1979 study on the other hand definitely can be used to support Graham’s assertions. One of the great strengths of Cock’s analysis was the fact that she explored the outcomes of caring in class and racial terms. She was unequivocal in her assertion that as domestic service was a ‘microcosm’ of apartheid that the process of caring was a confirmation and affirmation of racial and class distances. The inevitable consequence of the contradiction of intimacy and ideological difference was the emergence of constructed identities in gender, class and racial terms.

Anderson (2000: 120) also makes the point that when care is bought it ceases to be real care, because this is not a commodity that can be bought and sold. This contention implicitly supports Scott's (1990) assertion that there is a dichotomy between outward behaviour and inner sentiments. He was specifically considering the 'hidden transcripts' of resistance but the conception also holds true for caring. Although the domestic carer performs acts of caring the feelings of care may or may not accompany the action. Anderson is arguing that the feelings, if indeed they are present, are not for sale only the actions are bought. Similarly, it could be argued that a prostitute may perform the 'act of love', and this is what the client pays for, not her personal sentiments. Being 'in love' with her customer is not a part of the transaction. In a meeting with a Grahamstown social worker I was told of a recent case (1999) of how a white mother had abandoned her children leaving them in the care of her former black domestic worker. This domestic worker was not paid and for many months supported these white children from her own meagre income. This example is illustrative of the fact that real care is not a commodity in the market place.

'Real care' as defined by Anderson is a voluntary gift by the giver, which cannot be bought or coerced. The kindness and power dynamic, as earlier discussed, may woo or urge the domestic worker to feel this emotion but cannot guarantee that this will happen. Unquestionably, there are many instances of genuine bonding between employers and their servants, but this is not the point. The outward demonstration of caring is demanded irrespective of the personal feelings of the domestic worker. This fact is supported by the fact that deference of the servant is an integral component of many domestic service relationships. Within the act of deference, there is the outward manifestation of respect, regard, concern, interest and even love. In other words, deference is the public performance of caring.

What was stark in Anderson's study was the restricted choice many migrant domestic workers had in the caring roles they were expected to perform. The tragic irony of their situations was, having demanded care from them in domestic duties, child and elderly care, employers themselves were often blatantly uncaring. Anderson cites numerous instances of both physical and sexual abuse due in part to the vulnerability of the domestic workers. Many had little if no opportunity of finding alternative employers because of the precarious nature of their residence within the country. Her findings are at variance to mine. A major determining feature of the domestic service relationship in my study was 'pseudo-maternalism', that is, kindness rather than overt exploitation circumscribing the relationship. Anderson's results were more in line with Cock's, who also recorded many instances of abusive practices⁶.

Anderson puts forward a reason for similarities between the two studies. Although she does not use the term, the operative words are 'trapped workers' (Cock, 1989/1979: 8). Immigrant and domestic workers under apartheid are and were made relatively powerless by punitive state legislation which serves(d) to increase their vulnerability to employers' dictates and demands Anderson (2000: 10 –11). Writing in respect of Cock's study she states the following:

It draws many comparisons between the situation of domestic workers under apartheid and Victorian domestic workers in the United Kingdom, but is not at all informed about the living and working conditions of contemporary migrant domestic workers – which because of their racialised experiences and the role of immigration laws offer far more scope for comparison. Immigration policies [...] have reinforced the dependence of migrant domestic workers on their employer through employment and settlement restrictions, with deportation as the final control, and this is very similar to the system under which domestic workers in Apartheid South Africa worked, subject to pass laws and one-year renewable contracts.

⁶ Unlike Anderson, Cock recorded no instances of sexual abuse. This may well be because sexual relations between races were illegal during apartheid or the fact that domestic workers were too intimidated to reveal any incidents.

There is a direct relationship between the level of power of employers and the level of exploitation of their servants. Without checks and balances to the actions of employers, gross acts of abuse emerge all too readily in this sector of employment. In both their studies, legal redress was not a viable option for workers, as leaving the employment for any reason could result in expulsion from the country. Therefore, untenable employer practices if challenged by employees, resulted in them rather than the perpetrators being punished. Illegal workers, (under apartheid these were those without the required passes, with immigrants these were those without entry documentation), were and are easy targets for abusive practices. Workers, such as these, price for remaining in the country of their choice was determined and set by opportunist employers.

A marked feature of domestic service in both Anderson's and Cock's study was that significant numbers of workers had accommodation with their employers. Bujra (2000: 139) also noted that 44% of female domestic workers lived-in with their employers, usually sharing rooms with the children of the family. Male servants were generally more successful in negotiating private living arrangements away from their place of work. Domestic workers in these situations are always available, as the home they reside in is also their place of employment. Hours of work, time off and holidays are totally controlled and taken away according to the dictates of employers. If child or elderly care is part of the assigned work tasks, this often involves being on call twenty-four hours a day. The depersonalisation of servants is also exacerbated in these types of situations, as their lives outside the employer's home are kept at a distance and their primary function is to service the needs of this family rather than their own. Regular visiting by own family members was difficult under apartheid, as without passes other family members should have been resident in the 'Batustans'

(Homelands). Equally, migrant domestic workers often leave their own families 'at home' whilst they seek employment abroad. In both case scenarios the personal circumstances of the domestic workers facilitates their 'permanent availability' to their employers (Anderson, 2000: 41).

Anderson noted in her study that many of those workers residing with their employers were inadequately fed. In some cases, the food for pets of the family was far superior to that of the servants. Cock also noted that food given to many of the domestic workers was inadequate. In one of our meetings in 1999, she indicated that a common feature in her 1979 study was that many servants stole food from their employers. This was downplayed in *Maids and Madams* (1989/79), as she feared at the time the potential repercussions to her informants. In contrast, all of the employers and employees I interviewed (1999) stated that the food of the house was readily available for the servants. (The reality of these professions did not always match and this variance is discussed in the fieldwork. However, the point is here that all parties vocally stated that food was 'freely' available). Indeed, in one of my interviews an employer expressed concern that her maid did not eat properly and was always trying to encourage her to improve her diet. None of the servants I interviewed ate their meals with their employers, but they informed me that this was their personal choice. For example, one domestic worker stated that as her working day was long she would rather have her mid-day meal at around 3.00pm, as she would not be back home with her own family until after 7.00pm.

Another marked difference in my sample to that of Anderson's and Cock's was the fact that the majority of the domestic servants I interviewed did not live-in with their employers. The only one that did, resided in the outhouses on the farm where she

worked. Her employer told me that this practice was ending as the majority of the farm workers chose to live in the townships. To support my findings I toured Grahamstown, and it was readily apparent that many of the outbuildings that were the traditional accommodation for servants were standing empty. As detailed in Appendix 2, the townships are encroaching on the once white sacrosanct town and therefore distance of travel for domestic workers to work was not a major issue. Undoubtedly having some degree of autonomy from employers on a daily basis, that is, able to return to own home, serves to regulate hours of work and curtails ‘permanent availability’. Living arrangements are clearly a powerful tool, which can enhance or hinder employers’ control over their servants.

Both Anderson and Cock consider the strategies of resistance that domestic workers can and do engage in. For example, Anderson (2000: 95) writes the following,

On 16 June 1987 [...] the organisation of Kalayaan was founded. Kalayaan, the Tagalog word for “Freedom”, was established to work for the rights of all migrant domestic workers, and specifically to campaign for the right to an immigration status that recognised their standing as workers, their right to change employers, and their right to normal work benefits and health care.

This organisation works alongside Waling Waling (now the United Workers’ Association), which focuses on providing practical and emotional support to those who have been abused. I do not propose to discuss Kalayaan’s accomplishments as outlined by Anderson, only to indicate that her consideration of ‘empowerment’ of domestic workers is an integral component of her research. Similarly, at the close of *Maids and Madams* (1989) Cock also tables the resolutions of the General Conference of South African Domestic Workers’ Union (SADWU) 29 November 19986, as a means and a vehicle to redress the extreme vulnerability and exploitability of workers in this sector of employment. Cock’s aspirations and hopes for improvements in the

lives of domestic workers undoubtedly focused extent on collective action that could put forward a cohesive strategy of campaign.

One of the resolutions of the SADWU Conference was a minimum wage of R200 per month (Cock estimated this as £60.70) for domestic workers. The exchange rate in 1999 approximated to R9.60: £1.00. The wages paid in my case studies ranged from R200–R600 per month, with the exception of one, which was higher than this. My sample was not a representative one, but from discussions with the Department of Labour officials, they asserted that the wages paid in my sample were reflective of the area. This seems to suggest that wages in the sector have not increased in line with SADWU's recommendations. The South African *Weekly Mail and Guardian* (Sept 20, 1996) ran an article entitled, 'Madam wins the day as Eve is cleaned out'. In it, the fact was highlighted that SADWU had disbanded due to severe cuts in overseas funding and allegations of mismanagement by union leadership. The then assistant general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) Zwelinzima Vavi was reported as saying, 'There is only a single employer for a single worker. It's impossible to organise stop-orders.' This remark was in reference to the failure of the implementation of conditions of employment for domestic and farm worker set out in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 1994 amendment⁷.

Vavi's comments were supported by Lisa Seftel (Labour Department's Director of minimum standards). She concurred that the implementation of 'stringent labour legislation' in supporting domestic workers was not viable as the constitutional right to privacy curtails free access into someone's home. The strategy, in her opinion, had

⁷ This act and its ramifications are set out in Appendix 3.

to be prevention rather than inspection, with the emphasis on educating employers and employees to their respective rights. For example, instead of unionisation, the Labour Department was as of 1996 considering places where domestic workers congregated as teaching venues, such as local branches of political parties, churches, clinics and women's organisations. None of the domestic workers I spoke to and interviewed were members of any union or women's organisation.

Anderson's study also indicates many instances of very low wages. The misery of the domestic workers was compounded by the fact that they often have to pay off punitive loans for their emigration. In an interview in my Johannesburg pilot study with a Zulu domestic worker called Rosemary, she made this interesting observation. Her living conditions and pay were good and her employers were making plans to purchase a retirement home for her. She stated, 'I've been lucky, but I'd have worked for my madam whatever she was like. I was desperate, I turned up at her door and asked her for work. I've been here ever since. I would've stayed as long as she'd have me [...].' Rosemary's point is valid for many domestic servants. These workers are committed to work for their employers irrespective of their pay and conditions, because there are little if no alternative employment opportunities available. Migrant workers in an alien environment have the additional pressure of deportation if they are without work, which will clearly increase their vulnerability to employers' demands.

In Grahamstown (1999) chronic unemployment within the black community meant that, these workers were still 'trapped'. In a sense, 'economic apartheid' rather than 'political apartheid' is ensuring a massive pool of unskilled labour, which is impelled to work for a pittance. South African *Weekly Mail and Guardian* (1996) wrote, 'The country's large pool of unskilled labour means that for many young and mostly rural

black women, domestic work is their only career path'. It is the lack of choice that is the determining factor in levels of vulnerability and exploitability, and as Cock's, Anderson's, and my findings have shown, such things as state legislation and unemployment ratios are major influences on choices available to domestic workers. As indicated in the Introduction, if the implementation of a minimum wage for domestic servants in South Africa comes to statute it is likely to invoke an immediate response of many employers dispensing with their servants. The question to be asked is this, if wages for those servants able to maintain their employment does increase will this adversely affect the interrelations between the employer and themselves? I have argued that the power of many employers is enhanced through the idiom of kindness. As wages become more of an issue, will the terms of the relationship be renegotiated with employers? Will they feel less inclined to show a benevolent face to their employees as money rather than kindness is the predominant inducer to acquiescence?

(ii) Bujra's Tanzanian Study:

This study is a substantive body of work that commenced in 1986 in the National Archives in Tanzania. Bujra's (2000: 182-191) initial objective was to document rather than challenge the institution of domestic service. Therefore, to enable the compilation of a 'longer historical perspective', she returned to the country in 1989, 1992 and annually from 1994. Bujra clearly moved beyond reporting the historical details of domestic service, to that of an advocate of the fact that the institution was the persisting and supreme vehicle for class relations to be contextualised. This shift in her research objective is reflected in the title of her book *Serving Class*. The title is a deliberate statement to support her contention of the centrality of class in the domestic service relationship. The site of her research was the second largest city in Tanzania—Tanga. One of the reasons for choice as follows, '[...] with a long history

of industrial development and political activism it seemed a promising place to look at domestic service as an index of class relations' (Bujra, 2000: 11).

Bujra utilised a variety of research techniques, such as life and oral histories, survey and participant observations. From her survey of sixty employers and their ninety-seven servants she was able to 'derive a contemporary profile of domestic servants' which she could then use to compare against her collection of seventy-eight life histories (Bujra, 2000: 185-187). These details of her research techniques are not being raised in order for them to be critiqued but rather to highlight the fact that the scale of the research is in line with that of Cock's 1979 study. Both women can justifiably claim that as their samples are significant in size they can consider the patterns and trends of domestic service in the wider societal framework. Cock's research was conducted over a two-year period, that is, 1978 to 1979. As Bujra's timeframe was much longer, it is not unreasonable to suggest that it is valid for her to consider the patterns and trends of domestic service longitudinally as well as laterally.

Having stated that class analysis is a central theme of Bujra's work, she does not neglect the significance of both race and gender in the domestic service relationship. Her findings are of value in comparison to Cock's as they bring on to the agenda additional racial and gender considerations that were not present in the South African context of Cock's study. For example, Bujra discusses the implications of the employer and servant relationship when both are from the same ethnic group. Also, as earlier stated, the predominance of males in the sector of employment offers a comparison to Cock's female domestic servants. In my own research, as intimated in the explanation of my methodology, unlike Cock, I sought out black and coloured employers to ascertain if class differentials had superseded and replicated racial differences in circumscribing the terms of the employment relationship. Bujra's

findings therefore are of particular relevance to my own. Like Cock, I did not interview any male domestic servants and adding Bujra's male experience of domestic work will ensure that assumptions on the grounds of femininity are minimalised.

The criticism that Bujra (2000: 45) raises against Cock and other South African writers such as Gaitskell and Johnson is that racism is seen as imbuing all social practices. The outcome from this is that in those situations where race is removed, as in an employment relationship where both parties are of the same ethnic group, analysis becomes 'clouded'. If race is the only divisive propagator in the employment relationship, then women of the same colour should have a more harmonious relationship. Bujra (2000: 45) asserts that writers such as Johnson have claimed this to be so. She further argues that Gaitskell diffuses the issue by claiming that class differences are not as powerful or as exploitative as those of race. Bujra compares this with Hansen's findings in Zambia. Hansen is unequivocal that hierarchies emerge in the relationship irrespective of the fact that employer and servant are of the same race. Bujra concludes the point with the following, 'It is important not to discount the possibility that the oppressed can become oppressors, and that women together are not bound in sisterhood if divided by class'.

I stated in the class analysis section of the Literature Review, that there is within us the propensity to seek out difference in order to realise our own desires at the expense of others. Although having certain reservations to Thomas Hobbes' view of human nature, that is, man's nature being one of total self-interest, it does have some credence. Hobbes' vision was that the construction of the social contract arbitrated by the Leviathan was the means to control the baser impulses of human nature. The domestic service relationship has no such third party. If we now add the Hegelian

notion of the realisation of self through reciprocal struggle, there seems little doubt that the domestic service relationship will reconfigure to meet the personal desires and requirements of employers. Class differentials can and do therefore become powerful tools in the realisation of employers' consciousness of self and stand not only as an affirmation of their supremacy but also facilitate abusive practices. Although I am unable to draw general conclusions in respect of ethnicity because my sample was not only small but also unrepresentative, the worst case of abuse I discovered was by a coloured employer to her servant. The servant Esther was not allowed to sit down at all during her working day and was constantly shouted at by her employer. Her worst experiences were when her employer's mother came to visit, as she was 'as bad as her daughter'.

It probably was inevitable because of the apartheid history that South African writers on domestic service prioritised racial practices for their analysis. However, it is unfair to imply that class relationships are completely ignored. For example, as Cock's study was written from a Marxist-feminist framework, class analysis was an integral component. To reiterate earlier remarks, this led Cock to emphasise the then prevalent domestic labour debate. Bujra (2000: 43) asserts that one of the flaws of the debate was the unproven assumption that there was a link between domestic labour and female subordination. The assumption being that domestic work was a 'logical extension of women's domestic role'. In sum, domestic service was a feminised occupation and as such these gender implications diluted the ramifications of class interrelationships. The explanation of the subordination of the male domestic worker could not be adequately explained within the parameters of the domestic labour debate. When moving the argument out of the realm of race, the domestic debate implications would have to rest on male emasculation. This is because it is the

feminised nature of domestic work and not class relations that make possible the subordination of the worker.

Bujra (2000: 75) is critical of Cock's explanation of the feminisation of domestic service in South Africa after 1911. Cock's emphasis on missionary and public training for black women to 'educate' them for 'domesticity', in Bujra's opinion, is inadequate. This she states, does not explain the predominance of male servants prior to 1911, or account for the fact that thousands of domestics workers were uneducated and relatively few in numbers were missionary trained. Hansen (1990: 121) implicitly concurs with this when she puts forward the view that labour shortages in South African mines led to an increase in female domestic servants. There is also an assumption within the notion of domesticity that it is a female role which is 'learnt' elsewhere than the workplace. Bujra's (2000: 77) own findings contest this, as with a predominance of males within the sector with no domestic skills, other factors than domesticity are significant in the gendering of the occupation. Indeed Bujra concludes that domestic skills are not an advantage in the work placement as employers usually train their servants to their own requirements and standards. To refer back to Anderson's observations in reference to the maintenance of middle class life-styles, the servant undoubtedly will have little experience of the care of silk shirts, pine floors, expensive furnishings and will need to be shown how to do these things. Bujra records many instances of employers stating that they preferring male servants because they could learn quicker than females and their performance, when taught, was of a higher standard. If we also consider the paternalistic practices of many employers in this sector of employment, the teaching of the servant is a reaffirmation and validation of the parent and child relationship.

If domestic skills are not the major factor in determining the gender of domestic servants what is? In answering the question in the context of Tanzania, Bujra (2000: 89-90) sees the answers in the patterns of rural–urban migration.

Labour migration marks the beginnings of a process of proletarianisation by which relations to the land as a means to a livelihood are eroded, and men and women seek to sell their labour power in the market place. [...] men and women, and to a lesser degree young people, join the army of wage labour on unequal terms and out of different material circumstances. [...] For men, wage labour in town was clearly part of a patriarchal and family strategy for survival.

Women have traditionally been responsible for subsistence production of agriculture, which freed the male of the household to seek employment in the towns whilst still holding land through the labour of their women. Having links to the land was such a vital part of the maintenance of the male migrant worker that many single males would return to the rural area to find a wife (Bujra, 2000: 98). Bujra makes reference to Bozzoli's (1991) *Women of Phokeng*, and concurs with her point that struggles within peasant households, together with the increasing pressure on land, is reflected in the patterns of migration. It can be concluded that historically men in Tanzania have determined for them and their families that they are the ones who should leave to seek employment in the urban setting. Indeed, Bujra (2000: 100) asserts that it would be 'unthinkable' for most married women to contemplate leaving their husbands' land to seek employment in the towns. It has to be his decision for her to join him and this only if they can purchase land in close proximity to the urban centre for the wife to farm. The irony is that because subsistence farming is predominately a female preserve, this has liberated men for domesticity as migrant labourers.

Arriving to the towns as unskilled labourers, the choices available to migrant workers were extremely limited. As Bujra (2000:81) has indicated, this expanding pool of migrant labour has not been matched by a corresponding expansion in industry and

subsequent job opportunities. Entering domestic service is reflective of lack of other options to the migrant worker. Similarly, many of the domestic workers I interviewed stated that they would rather be in other employment but had ‘no chance’ of anything else. Having established a gender pattern within the sector it ‘exerts a strong normative pressure on the market: there is resistance to substitution even when supply and price conditions change’ (Bujra, 2000: 87). Male dominance in the sector in Tanzania was established during its colonial period and has persisted well into the 1980s. However, Bujra does suggest that the occupation is gradually becoming more feminised as women in ever increasing numbers are migrating to the towns from the rural areas. Like the earlier male migrants they have very few formal skills and enter domestic service as temporary sojourners hoping to move on to employment that is more conducive. As the labour supply increases there is a corresponding squeeze on wages and conditions of employment as the employers’ power is enhanced. Amenable personalities are important, as well as the competence in performing duties are necessary if employment is to be secured and maintained. For example, the preferred servants are those who do what they are told to do, do not answer back and are polite (Bujra, 2000: 80).

The preferred qualities outlined above were very similar to the ones intimated to me by employers in Grahamstown (1999). The word ‘childlike’ is a clear substitute for the listed attributes outlined above. It could be argued then that the social practices of paternalism easily transcend gender considerations. The term ‘houseboy’ rooted historically in slavery and colonialism is a testament of the fact that men as well as women have been relegated to the status of children for many generations. Bujra (2000: 31) notes in her case study of a male servant, Abu, that he ate his meals with the children of the house. He, and many like him, has to negotiate the contradiction

between being 'the child of the house' and the 'man' in his own home. This is done by an emphatic segregation of the two spheres and the different roles are played out in each location. The implications for masculinity are that it is situationally defined and gender assertions are secondary to the imperatives of earning a wage (Bujra, 2000: 176). This is in contrast to South Africa where domestic service is now a predominantly female occupation with the outcome that masculinity does not have to be reconstructed within this sector of employment.

If we apply another level of theoretical analysis, it provides even further links to my conception of 'chains of otherness' as outlined in the Literature Review. From the male identity of the servant, we can see that he is simultaneously 'the other' to the employer and the designator of 'otherness' to his wife. In other words he is defined and defines, he is constructed and constructs and he is subordinate and superior. His gender identity is therefore not only situational, but is also starved and fed by the power differentials in his personal relationships. Having argued that his gender is diminished within his role as a domestic servant, this is not the same as arguing that he is feminised. As Bujra (2000:3) has rightly argued that domestic service is not the only time that men have displaced women from their traditional occupations. When, for example, medicine, brewing, spinning and baking became marketable, men usurped them as their own. Therefore, it ceases to be a female defined occupation. Domesticity in Tanzania is a 'man's job' when he works for his employer, it becomes a 'woman's job' when he returns to his own home.

As earlier outlined, the gradual feminisation of domestic service is largely due to the shift in female rural–urban migration. Bujra (2000: 90) argues that there are two main reasons for this; firstly, the inadequacy of subsistence farming to meet their own

needs and secondly, as resistance to male domination. The Tanzanian Government in 1984 introduced a Development Levy tax on all adults over the age of 18, which impelled many women to seek urban employment to meet their tax bills. This increased pool of labour has not been matched by union activity. (Bujra, 2000: 175) convincingly argues that the cynicism, apathy and disorganisation of domestic workers are not a direct result of the feminisation process. During the colonial period when domestic workers were unionised and militant this was not, in her opinion, because males predominated, but rather that they were relatively privileged compared with other manual workers. Domestic workers were in short supply, which enhanced their bargaining capacity with employers.

Bujra (2000: 176) also concludes that domestic service in Tanzania is now a job 'without honour' in that the prestige and the wages set are extremely low. Atomised workers are now the norm, which will undoubtedly facilitate employers in exploitative practices. Industrial growth has been poor which will inevitably reduce viable employment alternatives for all domestic servants irrespective of their gender. Similarly, to Anderson and Cock, it could be argued that these workers are also becoming 'trapped' because of the economically determined restrictions placed upon them. Although Bujra does not record any evidence of gross abuse in this sector, it may well be significant in the future. As part of the feminisation process, she notes the preponderance of young female migrants. There is a direct relationship between vulnerability and exploitability. Young women, as Anderson has demonstrated, are high risk and this 'job without honour' may well deteriorate to a 'job without safety' in the future.

(iii) Hansen's *Zambian Study*:

Unlike the previous two sections, which considered Anderson's and Bujra's books, this section is centred on Hansen's 1990 paper in the *Journal of Women's History* rather than her book *Distant Companions*. The reason for this is that Hansen (1990) targets the specific topic of sexuality in domestic service relationships. Both in Cock's studies and mine overt sexual relations or sexual abuse in the domestic service relationship were not apparent. The reasons for this may be as follows; at the time of Cock's investigation, sexual relations between races was illegal and therefore the victims of this kind of abuse could have been terrorised into silence. In my sample younger women were under represented and the focus was on female-female domestic service relationships. Hansen (1990:120) lifts the sexuality in the domestic relationship outside the parameters of structural and comparative settings in order to examine the ambiguities in its sexual meanings. The focus of this section therefore is not the examination of domestic service per se in Zambia but the sexual connotations underpinning certain practices within the domestic service relationship.

Hansen's paper is drawn from a solid research base into domestic service in Zambia. This included extensive archival research in 1982, field research between 1983 and 1985 which included life histories of retired employers now resident in Great Britain and a sample survey of 187 households employing servants at the time of the study. The fact that from this substantive research Hansen chooses to focus on the ambiguities of sexuality is indicative of the importance she allots to it in domestic service in Zambia. The potential hazard that Hansen, and I also face in examining her arguments is, that by focusing heavily on one specific aspect of the domestic service relationship, is that the interpretation could be skewed. The inevitable consequence of examining sexual relations in isolation from their contexts, is the implication that they transcend all of the other factors in the domestic service relationship such as class and

gender divisions. Hansen may well believe that this is so, but without a fuller examination of the domestic service relationship, there is not the data to confirm the judgement. Hansen at the commencement of her paper refers the reader to her book (1989) as a means of contextualising her analysis of Zambian domestic service. This is not an adequate suggestion. Having lifted sexuality out to be examined she then needed to reposition it within the paper itself, in order that its linkages with race, gender and class may be accurately gauged.

Hansen's argues that the perceived sexuality of black women was seen as a potential threat to female employers, who acted to counter female servants' sexual promiscuity to choose male servants over them. Furthermore, that the deference of the male servant was more appealing as females were often 'less tractable and caused more problems' (Hansen, 1990:126). Hansen does not explore why female sexuality rather than male sexuality determines the gendering of the domestic service relationship. Historically both male and female sexuality has been racially caricatured. For example from the legacy of slavery, as discussed by Fox-Genovese (1988), 'Buck' and 'Jezebel' were equally powerful symbols of black sexuality.

Fanon (93: 177) argues that for the majority of white men 'the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions'. Van Onselen (1982) supports this assertion. To repeat Onselen's point once more, the 'black peril' of male sexuality resulted in white males taking measures to protect their women. If we now compare this to some of the duties of male servants during Zambia's colonial period the two do not match.

In colonial white households, male servants commonly entered bedrooms, bringing early morning tea; they made the beds and washed the underwear of white male and female employers alike; cooks almost without exception were men, for white householders

claimed that Zambian women “cannot cook” (Hansen, 1990: 136).

This would seem to suggest two things. Firstly, that the threat of black sexuality was not taken seriously by significant numbers of white colonials in Zambia. Secondly, that in employing black male servants this was a confirmation that it was the white rather than the black, which acted upon and determined the sexual relations between races. However, the white responsibility for abusive practices was hidden through the assertion that it was the black who was the tempter/temptress rather than the victim in the relationship. In doing this, the white perpetrator is able to abdicate blame and transfer the guilt to the abused.

The employing of black male servants over female servants would suggest that white colonial women were not expected to have any sexual liaisons with black men. Hansen (1990: 131) does intimate that these occasionally occurred, but the white female employers she interviewed were very conscious of the fact that they were the ‘embodiment of white womanhood’ and as such had roles to protect as wives to powerful men. This then not only confirms that black males would not importune white women, but they in turn would not initiate sexual intimacy with men of another race. There is no such conviction with white males and black females. Although arguing that black women were promiscuous this was the mask to hide the fact that white males could and would instigate sexual relationships with female servants. Palmer (1989: 144) argues that the outcome of perceived black female sexuality for the relationship between white and black women is that they are counterpoised against one another along class and racial lines. The white middle class female is the representation of the Madonna, the virgin and the angel, whereas the black working class female personifies the Magdalene, the whore and the devil. The prevailing image that Palmer emphasises is the cleanliness of the white employer set against the dirtiness of the black servant. Domestic service from this ideology is a fitting

occupation for the black woman as she is the embodiment of dirt and therefore suited to the 'dirty' tasks of home maintenance.

The overriding images are ones of both sexual and moral inferiority. Hansen (1990: 128) argues that these have been carried through from the colonial period until more recent times in Zambia.

The image of over exaggerated sexuality, colonial white women ascribed to African women, was informed by normative notions of moral laxity and looseness which this generation of whites attributed to African social organisation in general and to such marriage and descent practices as polyandry and matriliney in particular.

Furthermore, Hansen asserts, it was the white female of the household who determined the gender of the servants employed. It is noteworthy that black female sexuality was not usually openly admitted as a reason for not having female servants in the home. Perhaps this would have been a tacit recognition that their husbands could be lured or attracted to women of an inferior status to themselves. In a letter to a newspaper editor written in 1950 the writer stated, 'Only women who have lived among Africans have a glimmering idea of the primitive condition of the African female' (Hansen, 1990: 126). The operative word is 'primitive', the ambiguity of which disguises the sexual connotations associated with African women but at the same time suggests they are there. Hansen further asserts that it is sexuality fears that underpins comments such as these, as there is not much evidence of effort during the period to educate black women for domestic service. Similarly to Tanzania, men who entered domestic service brought little if no domestic skills with them. It could therefore be argued that they too were in a 'primitive state' when entering this sector of employment. White women were prepared to train their male servants in work tasks but not female servants. Perhaps it would not be too extreme to suggest that for

white women, there was the fear that training black women could result in them usurping their own position in the marital relationship.

Since Zambian Independence in 1964, the majority of employers of domestic servants are now black Zambians. The trend however has continued for a predominance of male workers in domestic service although some women have entered the profession. As of 1990, there was no indication of the beginning of the feminisation of the industry. However, there is now a considerable time lag since this research was undertaken, and it therefore cannot be said with certainty that feminisation is not now occurring. Indeed, Hansen (1990: 122) acknowledges that there has been a trend since colonialism's demise in Africa for women to gradually replace men in domestic service. The history of Zambian gendering in the sector does suggest that feminisation will be difficult. To clarify the point, in the post World War II years Zambia experienced severe male labour shortages in the then booming copper mines together with its secondary industries. Colonial officials developed a deliberate strategy to recruit more women into domestic service in order to liberate males for employment elsewhere. This was a marked failure as male numbers as servants continued unimpeded (Hansen, 1990: 122).

Hansen cites this as an example of the supremacy of sexuality fears, which take precedence over labour shortages. However, she does acknowledge the 'domestic struggles' elsewhere such as black females' own relationships with partners, which could prohibit them from entering the market. For instance, their own husbands did not want them to become domestic servants due to the precedence black males placed on their wives remaining in the home to fulfil own domestic duties and care for the family (Hansen, 1990: 126). This is similar to Bujra's findings in the Tanzanian

context where husbands required their wives to remain in the rural environment in order to facilitate their own urban migration. The difference between Hansen and Bujra is the emphasis they place on these black familial issues and their impact on entrance into domestic service. This is significant, if Hansen is correct and sexuality fears are the major factor in determining the gendering of domestic service, then it is prohibition that is maintaining male servant dominance. If this is true then the feminising of this sector of employment will be difficult and may take some considerable time if at all. On the other hand if Bujra's assertion of the significance of domestic decisions elsewhere are the significant factor, then it is the lack of availability of women which is the overriding reason for the male over representation as servants. If she is right, as in the case of Tanzania, the outcome of these 'domestic struggles' if shifting in females' favour could put pressure on the market and impel some degree of feminisation of domestic service. There is of course another scenario, where both Hansen and Bujra being correct, with the outcome that feminisation will occur in Zambia, but at a slower rate than elsewhere.

Hansen (1990: 137) is certain that fear of black female servants' sexuality, together with female employers' lack of trust in their male partners, are still major factors in the absence of female domestic workers in the sector. This is because Zambian female employers are far more overt in their distrust of female domestic workers than their white colonial predecessors. Many employers informed Hansen that they feared female servants would put 'love potions' into their husbands' food to attract their attention. However, unlike white colonial women they also openly acknowledge their distrust of their own male partners. For example, Hansen (1990: 135) writes:

Zambian madams anticipate and fear their husbands' extramarital affairs, not only with women domestics but with other wives, young relatives, women at the workplace, or women they meet at bars or on the streets. To attract their man's love and assure his financial

support, Zambian women will go to great expense to buy love medicines. Yet, they also know that they cannot rely on men. Unlike many West African countries, cultural norms in Zambia do not oblige men to distribute part of their resources to wives for household purposes.

According to Hansen, Zambian male sexual promiscuity, as perceived by their wives, is promoting yet a further barrier to females entering domestic service. Again, like the colonial women black Zambian women are the ones to make the decision on the gender of their servants. Like the colonial white woman before them, there must be the assumption that they themselves will not have sexual liaisons with their male servants. Hansen does note that male servants no longer enter bedrooms or wash female underwear. This does seem to imply that class differences between female employers and their male servants are not seen as emphatic as racial differences to sexual intimacy. The very fact that bedrooms are no longer accessible does imply that it may well be considered as a potential hazard.

Adding sexuality into the domestic service relationship adds further dimensions to it. For the employer the sexualisation of the servant further encourages the depersonalisation process and their caricaturing. Racial differences accentuate perceived sexuality but as Hansen has demonstrated, class differences are also a vehicle to demonise women of a lower social class. For example, as she indicates, Zambian middle class women, irrespective of their own lack of trust in their husband's fidelity, stigmatise female servants on the grounds that they are temptresses and seductresses who given the opportunity would prey on their men. There are also some nuances for paternalistic social practices. The denial of adulthood to the servant not only maintains their subordination but it also denies and controls their sexuality. The implication being that children are not sexually active or aware and therefore are no threat to the employer. Conversely, as a child, particularly a female child, they are

acquiescent and maniable in sexual encounters. The sexual ambiguity being that the black female servant is simultaneously the child and a siren that is given the blame and accountability for the illicit sexual relationship.

It could be argued that the deference of the male servant involves a certain degree of emasculation, in that he becomes asexual and non-threatening. Any evidence of disdain could be interpreted as recognition of control of his sexuality but a rejection of it at the same time. All of which is underpinned by the fact that he is not 'allowed' to initiate sexual encounters with his female employer because of racial and class barriers. Female servants' on the other hand, I would argue, perceived sexuality is always present. Her deference could be interpreted as availability, controllability and implicit agreement, because any disdain could be seen as a manifestation of her wildness, promiscuity and savagery. Together her deference and disdain all serve to compound her status as a sexual being and as such confirms her usability in sexual encounters with male employers. The only way her sexuality is diminished is through the ageing process where her attractiveness as a sexual partner might lessen the interest of predatory males. Clearly, not all servants are sexual targets, but undoubtedly with the perception of female sexuality being greater than that of the male, their situations as servants will be more precarious.

(iv) Palmer's American and Srinivas' Cross-Cultural Perspectives:

Palmer's (1989) historical perspective considers domestic service patterns in American middle class homes during the period 1920-1945. This period is of particular significance in that, employers continued to employ servants even against the harsh economic pressures of the Depression years. All of which confirms Bujra's (2000: 37) point of domestic service enduring against different social contexts but at the same time remaining as a vehicle for the maintenance of class distances and

impositions. In the period 1900-40 the percentage of domestic service increased approximately by a third in America, which is indicative that middle class women of the period were employing servants in ever increasing numbers. Palmer (1989: 13-14) asserts that women's perception of their own status was heavily dependant on the lowered social positioning of their servants. Black working class women increasingly became the preferred choice because, even if the employer herself remained in the home, she could distance herself from her servant(s) through both class and racial divisions.

Srinivas (1995: 269) synthesises current literature on domestic service in order to consider trends and patterns that transcend national boundaries. As in Palmer, a dominant pattern she immediately discerns and highlights is the fact that racial and ethnic dominance features in many domestic service relationships. Especially in countries that have legacies of slavery and colonialism, 'ideas of the ruler and ruled are carried over into the domestic sphere'. It is within the ideology of difference that the complexities of servitude are played out. Palmer, Cock and Anderson all stress that where servants are racially different, this together with their class positioning, maximises the employer's power and ability to emphatically dictate the terms of the relationship. Bujra's and Hansen's respective studies are illustrative of the fact that class and sexuality constructs are also powerful tools in creating social distance through difference. Again, the outcome is to the employers' advantage in enhancing their ability to exploit their servants if they so desire.

Palmer (1989: 14) indicates that emphatic social distancing in American domestic service during the period was reinforced by ideological constructions. Middle class employers' deliberate choice of working class women of different ethnic backgrounds

as servants facilitated their desired social supremacy by their use of racial prejudices and caricatures. It also enhanced her power to exploit.

Hiring a servant of a lower economic class, foreign origin, or stigmatised racial status increased the housewife's power in setting the conditions of work; it also protected her sense of distance from the worker. A housewife could more easily feel herself "subject", able to believe that experiences constituted reality, and to deny similar capacity to the "servant" the "other".

The ideology not only socially constructed the servant but also constructed the employer. Indeed, Palmer (1989: 14) contends that one of the purposes of her book is to explore whiteness as a socially constructed phenomenon. To repeat an earlier remark from the discussions in Hansen's study, an overriding image of middle class femininity was that it was clean and pure, whilst black working class femininity was defiled and dirty. This dialectic relationship between the two women becomes the site of affirmation of the identity of the employer through the reciprocal struggle and rejection of 'the other'. I do not propose to reiterate the Hegelian and Kristeva's arguments outlined in the Literature Review, but only to draw attention to the fact that Palmer's analysis is similar in content. Equally, Hansen's sexual imagery of perceived black female sexuality in Zambia is an empirical example to support these theoretical conceptions.

Srinivas (1997: 269) is not specific in the ideological strategies used to enhance social distances but does acknowledge their existence. For example, she asserts that a common feature in different cultural contexts is for domestic workers to be perceived as 'non-persons'. To clarify the point, servants' identities are taken by their employers, in that servants' roles become reflections of employers' prestige and social positioning. As ideological constructions rest on the depersonalisation and objectification of the servant this is a strong indicator that they are occurring in many different contexts. Clearly wider societal social perceptions and practices will have

relevance in determining the nuances of constructed differences (see Rollins, 1985: 92). Palmer (1989: 137) adds a further dimension to the construction process in that she asserts that domesticity itself being imbued with meaning enhances the ideological differences between the employer and servant. She argues that a prevailing image of housework in America at this time was one of the management of dirt. The pristine model wife needed another woman to do this difficult and dirty physical labour. Domesticity is a job for a 'dirty' woman, and this type of woman is the only one suitable for these 'dirty' jobs. Keeping both domestic duties and the woman that performs them at a distance from self ensures that the self-image of purity and perfection is safeguarded.

Another outcome of the social distance chasm is that it enhances the status of the employer and is an affirmation of their superior life-styles. Srinivas (1995: 274) asserts that servants within many different cultures are used as an expression of status, that is, they become status symbols of their employers' material successes. The act of deference transcends nationalities and is the outward demonstration of servants' recognition, and also the recognition of those that witness servants' deferential manner, that the employer is of a superior status to them. More than this the fact that a servant works for me, is indicative of my status in life. Srinivas, (1995: 270) cites the example of the maid who opens the door or has the drinks tray in hand, all of which provides an 'ambience of affluence and comfort through passive service'. Anderson (2000) similarly argues that domestic service is an outward manifestation of a middle class life-style. Furthermore, it facilitates the employer's acquisition of the physical trappings of the sumptuous symbols of status. For example, a servant is required to wash the hand-wash only silk shirts, polish the pine floors etc. Bujra

(2000) with her assertion of 'expressive consumption' by the middle classes of Tanzania is also exemplifying Srinivas' point.

Status amplification is achieved if the social distance between the two parties in the social service relationship is maximised. This is validated by Srinivas' (1995: 272) observation that 'it is not the wealthiest countries which have the highest servant ratios but those with the largest income differentials'. A manifestation for domestic workers from income inequality are low wages, long hours, low prestige and an occupation resorted to by the least skilled and assimilated groups (Rollins, 1985:44). All of the domestic service studies presented substantial evidence of these specific characteristics. In addition, these features not only transcended national boundaries and were features of domestic service for both male and female servants. Srinivas (1995: 270) suggests a possible reason for this, that is, domestic service is perceived as a feminised occupation and as such is devalued.

The work is assigned a low rank because it is associated with women, does not call for any particular or identifiable skills, is considered drudgery involves cleaning which is influenced by ideas of purity and pollution [...].

The notions of disease and pollution are exemplified in Palmer's study more than any of the others. The ideologies in different contexts will be at variance as they will be reflective of the prevailing preoccupations and agendas of the employers who are in dominance in the relationship. If we again apply Hegelian concepts to the domestic service relationship, the point becomes less obscure. As consciousness of self is realised through the reciprocal struggle with the 'other', it will have different nuances in different settings because consciousness of self is not a uniform perception. For example, Palmer is implying that 'whiteness' is in itself a construction. Therefore, it could be argued not only do I construct the 'other' but I also construct myself. In

Palmer's study the image of self as the pristine pure white housewife is counterpoised against the dirty polluted black servant. In Hansen's study, the civilised woman perceives herself as protecting her male, and standing against the unbridled sexual passions of the primitive savage. In other scenarios such as Cock's and mine, familial ideologies are played out in order to maintain power differentials. In sum, the roles are diverse, the outcomes are similar, that is, class and racial distance are maintained through the ideologies of oppositional difference.

Perhaps there is an ideological image of domestic servants that does transcend national boundaries. This is only implicitly acknowledged by Srinivas in her conception of 'non-persons' and more explicitly in Palmer's insightful observations of the employer's and servant's role in the fulfilment of domesticity. Palmer (1989: 74) writes,

A housewife could more easily feel herself "subject", able to believe that her experiences constituted reality, and to deny similar capacity to her servant the "other". Organising the work so that the domestic did the heaviest jobs helped the employer to see herself as the "mind of the job and distinct from the employee, who presented the "body".

The words 'mind' and 'body' easily fit into the various ideological constructs of self and 'other' listed above. The mind is in supremacy, it is the director, controller and definer both of what the body is and what it performs. The analogy is one of power, reflects the depersonalisation process of the 'other' and justifies class and racial social distancing. Another point to remember is that ideological constructions will be significantly enhanced or diminished by wider societal factors. If we consider Cock and Anderson's studies the fact that the domestic workers were 'trapped' in their positions facilitated gross acts of abuse because employers were able to utilise them more readily as ciphers for their demands. To repeat the point, in respect of their

findings, without checks and balances to their treatment of their servants, employers' ideological perceptions are allowed free rein and consequently the power differential increases, as does the potential for exploitation.

There is however, an inherent contradiction in this characteristic of 'non-person' status for the domestic worker. As Rollins (1985) discovered in her covert activities as a domestic worker, the 'personhood' of the servant is purchased along with their labour. In all the studies, the personal qualities of domestic workers such as deference, caring qualities, honesty, integrity and immediate obedience were stressed as more important than their ability to do the job. There is yet a further contradiction, the personal qualities of the servant become in themselves the property of the employer and a reflection of their success as the managers of the home. In sum, the personability of a servant is an affirmation of the competence of the employer to manage her home. Simultaneously the worker is then a person and 'non-person' the precedence of each role being determined by individual employers. All of which suggests that the domestic service relationship is a dynamic one, which because its intimacy and distance can readily be redrawn by employers when required or desired.

Srinivas (1995: 273) notes an increased trend in America and Britain for professional cleaning and childcare rather than individual domestic servants. This would negate significantly the above points. However, professional services are not without critics, and are not uniform trends across national boundaries. For example, many of the employers interviewed by Rollins (1985) denounced cleaning services as expensive, impersonal and rigid. With cheap sources of labour readily available and terms and conditions of employment obscure, the individual domestic servant has many advantages over that of a professional agency. Srinivas, (1995:272) also notes that

domestic service is increasingly becoming a feminised occupation. For example, in addition to South Africa, Europe, North America, Peru and India are all witnessing marked female gendering in domestic service, many of whom are relatively unskilled and uneducated which condemns them to their position as low paid and marginalised workers. It is not unreasonable to suggest that employers will perceive these increasing numbers of female domestic workers as a lucrative alternative to professional services. This pool of labour is relatively cheap and hours of work can be maximised to their own advantage.

(v) Conclusion:

In response to the questions of the durability, adaptability and versatility of domestic service the answers can be found in the huge income differentials that exist between social groups. From the base of significant material differences, employers are able to take advantage of domestic workers' vulnerability and desperation and maximise the capacity of exploitation. These income differentials have endured through different political and social contexts, are marked by longevity in the histories of many countries and there are no significant indicators that they are decreasing. The outcomes are that the power differentials within social groups endures and the patterns of oppression are able to transcend time and space. However, there is a denial by the powerful that this is so, because admission would be a tacit acceptance that these inequalities should be addressed. The ideological constructs become the masks to justify the material reality. Social distance is not the result of income inequality but rather a manifestation of moral superiority, personal qualities and abilities of self in relation to the 'other'. Race, class and gender differences serve to increase the layers of the masks, and deny the consequences of material inequality.

Domestic service is a contradictory contest as it on the one hand exposes income differentials but at the same time is the fulcrum for the ideological disguise. As domestic service is inextricably linked to income inequality as this is persisting it will too. It is not so much that domestic service is endurable, adaptable and versatile, rather that it is a constant reflection of material inequality. The institution only appears to reconfigure in different contexts. The ideologies are reshaped and reworked to hide and justify exploitation of the marginalised groups of society.

In Anderson's, Palmer's, and Srinivas's studies and reviews ethnicity and race were major factors in the domestic service relationship. The point to remember is that in each of these scenarios, there were large pools of unskilled labour for employers to access. It is perhaps over simplistic to suggest that income inequalities are the only major causal factors, without considering how these income differentials are produced. In many parts of the world non-white groups are over presented in the lower income groups of their societies. Therefore, it can be argued that ideologies are not only reflective of income gaps, but that they are in themselves active agents in producing them. South Africa, during its apartheid years, implemented formal policies to ensure that many of their black population were restricted in their social mobility. For example, occupation bars ensured that the higher paid jobs were denied to the majority. Income differentials were enforced on racial principles. Other countries with large pools of unskilled non-white labour could be accused of similar practices. The barriers to social mobility through employment segregation were not formalised but present just the same.

However, as Bujra's and Hansen's studies have indicated, there are domestic service contexts where racial differences between employers and servants are fewer.

Tanzania and Zambia achieved independence from colonial impositions over thirty years ago in 1961 and 1964 respectively. In South Africa there are significant shifts being achieved in its income distributions. To refer back to the figures quoted in the conclusionary remarks of the Introduction, the black share of personal income is rising, between 1970–1979 up from 20% to 33%. The questions this raises for South Africa is will the marginalisation of domestic service change with the removal of racial oppression? The findings of Bujra and Hansen are not that encouraging. To reiterate Bujra's description of domestic service in Tanzania, it is now a 'job without honour'. Hansen argues that the ideologies of difference have reconfigured along sexual lines rather than those of race. The ultimate irony being that the sexual 'othering' of domestic servants can be traced back to the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

It would seem then, that class inequalities could become in their own right powerful divisors in this sector of employment. As with racism, class inequalities have the power to both compound income differentials and increase them. This in turn increases the social distance between the classes, which facilitates the formation of ideologies of superiority. Bujra noted the continuation of paternalistic practices between employers and their servants, which is indicative that racism is not the only vehicle for the denial of adulthood status to adult men and women. The process to accomplish is the same as with racial ideologies, there is a degree of depersonalisation of the domestic worker. Hansen's example of stigmatising servants as temptresses and sirens also clearly indicates that the class differential is wielded in the same way as the racial one. Those in the lower class strata are universalised through the caricaturing of their individual characteristics into the collective whole. Income differentials are thus the ground for ideological difference formations in many

contrary contexts. However, these ideologies are dynamic and act to justify, disguise and maximise the income gap, not only those between different racial groups, but those also of class and gender.

In his book *Global Sociology* Cohen (R., 2000: 127-130) raises the question of whether Transnational Corporations (TNCs) exercise 'freedom without responsibility'. The evidence put forward indicates that they act for 'good and ill' within their operations. One of their activities which is pertinent to the discussion, is their offshore production within export-processing zones (EPZs) mostly in developing countries. The arguments in favour of these types of activities are that they offer employment opportunities for the unemployed and marginalised groups. Of specific note is that significant numbers of their employees are young women. Although liberating them from 'powerful forms of patriarchy characteristic of many rural societies' women in the zones are usually low-waged. A criticism levelled at TNCs is that they are able to relocate at will always looking for cheap sources of labour for their operations. The point here is not to consider the relative benefits and detriments of their activities but rather to consider their impact on income differentials. From the evidence, it is highly unlikely that they will ameliorate material inequities and in some cases will exacerbate wealth divisions within and between nation states. As domestic service is fed through income inequalities, it could be argued that the process of globalisation rather than eroding it, is an aid to its perpetuation.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL ECONOMY

A major underpinning theme in the thesis is that through the ideologies of difference, domestic servants lose some of their own identities in the employment relationship. I have argued that the process to achieve this is a complex one, with income differentials within the wider societal group facilitating and entrapping domestic servants into their designated roles. Depersonalisation of the domestic employee, whether this be through characteristic caricatures or paternalistic and maternalistic practices, enhances the power and consciousness of self for the employers. Servants can become ciphers for their demands because of the social distance created by the power differentials in the work relationship. The intimacy of the domestic service relationship would seem to suggest that power be exclusively centred in the employer. This is clearly not so, as the respective positions of employer and domestic worker are strengthened and weakened by the social forces outside the domestic service relationship. For example, with a relatively high percentage of the black population unemployed, an alternative occupation to domestic service is not a viable option. Domestic servants repeatedly told me, 'It is this or nothing'.

The aims and objectives of this chapter are threefold:

- (i) contextualisation of the lives of domestic servants outside the domestic service relationship;
- (ii) quantification of the wider societal pressures and inequalities that are entrapping domestic workers;
- (iii) countering the potential pitfalls of a qualitative approach in the research methodology.

The contextualisation of the lives of domestic servants is a reaffirmation of their individuality and their status, and will give a degree of understanding of their lives beyond that of a domestic servant. Bujra (2000) successfully argues that Tanzanian male domestic servants assume different roles in different situations. For example, Abu (the subject in one of her case studies) is a child in his employers' home but a patriarch in his own. In considering the wider picture in the lives of my interviewees, this will enable me to ascertain if they too have to become the chameleon at work and then change at home. The wider societal factors are seriously impacting on the lives of domestic workers and as such need to be measured. Several of the domestic workers I interviewed, in response to the question, 'Has your life got better now apartheid has gone?' were emphatic that it had not. Rachel, a domestic worker in Johannesburg, informed me, 'We have economic apartheid now. What can you do if you have no money?' The potential pitfall of a methodology that favours a qualitative approach is that it could in itself be an agent in narrowing domestic servants to that of workers with nothing beyond. The outcome inadvertently also one of stripping domestic workers of some of their 'personhood'. Space in the chapter will be allocated for the 'voices' of both employers and domestic workers to be heard to counter this potential negative outcome of the methodology.

The chapter will proceed with an initial overview of South African society. Poverty, crime, HIV-positive statistics in South Africa are of such proportions that they are of international concern. The ensuing social turbulence is having a significant impact on all social strata. It has to be remembered that the 'new' South Africa is still in its relative infancy and there is a sense of expectations rather than realised aspirations. A white historian, who was also a retired schoolteacher, and had lived for over thirty years in Grahamstown, crystallised many of the residents' ambivalent feelings.

Commenting on the crumbling infrastructure in the locality she made the following comments:

Hospitals are terrible places these days. People think they are going there to die if they stay too long. You have to take your own pillows and your own blankets. They steal the knobs off the door and so on. It is very sad because this place used to have a good hospital. Being a historian I know it has to level off before it can level up.

One is sad for the white children. What is happening is that most of the white parents see no future for their children, and so they are going to go. There is no point putting your head in the sand, as I have pointed out to a number of my friends, things cannot improve in the short term. More and more blacks are being educated in the universities [...] Take my school [...] in 1995 quarter black, now three-quarters black. Last year [1998] the Principal told me she had a terrible year with these black girls, because they wouldn't accept discipline [...] And of course, you must understand the transition for the white girls has been very very difficult. [...] these black girls think nothing of taking the white girls things and using them.

This quote is indicative of a society in flux and that white residents as well as black ones are being adversely affected by the changes occurring within South African society. The implications, from the expressed view of this historian, are that there are some whites that believe that any improvements for the black community will be because of deterioration in the living standards for themselves. However, many white South Africans expected a 'blood bath' to accompany the collapse of the apartheid regime. The fact that this has not happened does appear to be a significant factor in the stoicism of many of the Grahamstown's residents. Irrespective of ethnic backgrounds, many were optimistic that societal conditions would eventually stabilise and the next generation would realise the benefits of this new era in South Africa. As Martha, a fifty-eight year old domestic servant remarked, 'It is too late for me and others like me. But it will be better for our grandchildren.'

The second section of the chapter will consider quantitative statistics in relation to individual lives of both employers and domestic servants. These will incorporate data

in respect of household sizes, water provision, unemployment, educational attainment, crime, poverty, and familial circumstances. This will add depth to understanding the lives of domestic servants outside of their work situation. In addition, this data will substantiate the social factors that entrap them not only in their jobs but also into their ideological roles as the 'other'. Cock's (1989/1979) assertion of 'trapped' domestic workers was premised on the restrictions of the punitive apartheid practices. There was an implicit hope underpinning her remarks, that with the eventual lifting of the regime there would be an amelioration of the dire conditions of employment for these marginalised workers. The quantitative data will serve as a sobering reminder that the legacies of apartheid have not only been left in lingering social practices but also have manifested themselves in severe economic inequalities. AIDS is a relatively recent phenomenon, and this too is potentially a major obstacle in overcoming income inequalities in South Africa. This is because it simultaneously decimates the workforce and adds to the cost of public-sector health care. It is impossible to quantify the human misery to victims and their bereft family and friends. Thompson's (1968) remarks in respect of 'standard of life' and 'way of life', as explained in the Introduction, take on a certain poignancy in this context. An improvement in pay and conditions for domestic service may not necessarily be indicative that their 'way of life' has improved particularly if their lives have been touched by personal tragedy.

The next two sections of the chapter will consider government and trade union strategies to redress South Africa's social and economic challenges. In May 1998 the South African Government, UK Department for International Development, United Nations Development Programme, World Bank and Dutch Government funded a Poverty and Inequality Report (PIR) for the office of the Executive Deputy President

and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty and Inequality. In this comprehensive report, South Africa's current economic situation was discussed in detail and government strategies and recommendations for policy implementations were laid out. An examination of PIR's recommendations for government will be the basis of the third section of the chapter. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) successfully campaigned for the inclusion of farm and domestic workers in the ambit of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 1994. The fourth section in addition to considering trade union activity will specifically target BCEA to discover if labour initiatives together with labour legislation are offering some degree of protection to domestic employees from exploitative practices by employers. The chapter will conclude by drawing the qualitative and quantitative data together to respond to the threefold aims and objectives of the chapter.

(i) Overview of South Africa:

In per capita terms South Africa is an upper-middle-income country, but despite this relative wealth, the experience of most South African households is of outright poverty or of continuing vulnerability to being poor. In addition, the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world, and many households still have unsatisfactory access to education, health care, energy and clean water. The situation is likely to affect not only the country's social and political stability, but also the development path it follows: countries with less equal distributions of income and wealth tend not to grow as rapidly as those with more equitable distributions (PIR, 1998).

PIR utilised the Gini coefficient to quantify South Africa's income inequality. The Gini range is as follows: 0 (absolute equality) to 1 (absolute inequality) South Africa's Gini coefficient as of 1998 was 0.58 which was only surpassed by Brazil. In the case of African households within South Africa the Gini coefficient was 0.54, which was nearly as high as the national figure. The majority of the poor live in rural areas and 50% of the population is rural based. South Africa's rural areas account for 72% of the country's total poor. PIR (1998) defines poverty 'as the inability to attain

a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy them'. Poverty is unequally distributed amongst South Africa's nine provinces. The Eastern Cape has the highest provincial poverty (71%), followed by Free State (63%) and North-West (62%). Poverty is not exclusive to one ethnic group but is predominantly African. The figures are as follows; African (61%), coloureds (38%), Indians (5%), and whites (1%).

The amount needed to uplift the poor to the poverty line in 1995 was approximately R28 bil. Sustained economic growth will therefore be crucial for South Africa if it is to have the resources to reduce the numbers of people living within the poverty gap. In the 1960s, economic growth was approximately 6% per annum, with employment growing at 3% per annum. Output and employment experienced serious slowdown during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Population growth continued at a steady increase of 2% per annum resulting in a decline of real per capita income. Although incomes declined across the social strata income differentials were still extensive. By 1994, 30% of the labour force was unemployed with the highest preponderance being within the African community. Since 1994, 500,000 jobs have been lost. PIR (1998) asserts that if unemployment is to be reduced significantly South Africa will need to achieve the 6% annual economic growth rate of the 1960s. Economic constraints that are hindering the realisation of these targets are inadequate and inefficient investment, strains on the balance of payments and a decline in employment creation.

The report does not quantify poverty in relation to gender, but does make the point that women are more likely to be poor than men. *The Economist* (24 Feb 2001) criticises the South African Government for its lack of concern over family structure breakdown. What this profile article does not say, is that the burden of fragmented

families falls predominantly on women. African women are an over-presented group in the lower stratum of South African society. All the domestic servants I interviewed, both in Johannesburg and Grahamstown, were either single parents or the main financial providers for their families. In some cases where domestic workers had partners, they were an added strain rather than a support. In Grahamstown, the four domestic agency workers I interviewed illustrated the reality of poverty and familial responsibilities. The following is an extract from my field notes:

I discussed with the women why they went to the supermarket every evening after work. Maureen explained that none of their men folk were working but still wanted to go drinking in the 'shebeen'. **[Local drinking house]** If the money was spent on food then the men could not take it. I asked why did they not just refuse to give it to them. I was told that if the men wanted the money they would take it. I asked them why they did not hide the money. Maureen said, "That's no good they'll find it." The women did then admit to me that all their wages were not spent on food, that they did have some hidden a way. The important thing was that all the men believed the money was all spent on food. Believing this would ensure that they would not go hunting for it. Irene was quite keen for Helen **[employer]** to start a saving scheme for them. I asked her what she wanted to save for, and was told to improve her house. Irene would really like to have a proper bathroom in her home. All of them thought it would be very good to have inside water. Irene particularly liked the idea of inside hot water, so she would not continually have to heat water on her stove for the family's ablutions.

These women, and many like them, will not be able to bridge the poverty gap with their remuneration from domestic service. There has to be viable employment alternatives for them to move into. However, the South African government is pursuing a policy of sustained economic growth as a vehicle to increase employment opportunities. There are some indicators that the stagnation of the South African economy is over, but growth of the economy needs to accelerate.

It is still creating employment far too slowly to make a meaningful impression on unemployment. [...] There is a critical link between the jobs that people do at different occupational levels and the wages they receive: 42% of Africans earn less than R1,000 from employment, while

11% of Indians and 4% whites fall into this category. Those falling into the lowest income category tend to be employed in jobs requiring the lowest levels of skills (PIR 1998).

Job creation clearly will be a major factor in alleviating poverty. However, there is no guarantee that accelerated growth in the South African economy will result in a similar increase in employment opportunities. A significant feature of modern industry is rationalisation of its production processes, that is, maximisation of capital and a streamlining of its work force. The outcome is a shedding of labour with an increased demand for the relatively few specialists and skilled workers. PIR (2000) further states that market forces alone will be insufficient to address income inequality. Poverty levels may drop but the income differential may remain constant. As earlier stated, it is the differentials that are the power source for employers' exploitative practices. As such domestic workers pay and conditions may not mirror wealth creation in the wider economy.

South Africa has another significant problem. Even if jobs are created there has to be the work force available to take up these employment opportunities. *The Economist* (2001) was unequivocal in its assertion that the 'shadow of AIDS hangs over almost every aspect of South African life'. The projected mortality rates for the next ten years are estimated at between 4–6mil. The United Nations is predicting that the epidemic will curtail South Africa's growth rate by 0.3–0.4% per annum. The forecast for the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reduced by 17% (or \$22bil) in the year 2010. *The Economist* further asserts that many companies in the next ten years will lose between 40-50% of their workforce. Capital intensive industries, ironically, will probably be the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of the disease hitting their workers. This is because reliance on highly skilled operatives can be

high risk, as these are difficult to replace. Employers' risk benefit costs, that is, death benefit, spouses and disability pensions are expected to rise significantly.

Employers are not the only ones having to pay the cost of the AIDS epidemic. The financial burden on the government in health care is immense. *The Economist* (2001) asks:

Will the health-care system be able to cope? No. [...] with 4mil sufferers already, treating them all is out of the question. However, in their dying days AIDS patients will have to be looked after. This is likely to push up the public-sector health bill from roughly 28 billion rand to 38 billion rand in 2010.

All this will constrain much needed resources for such things as income redistribution, housing, education and training and poverty initiatives. The majority of the domestic servants I interviewed had little or no education, and consequently had few marketable skills. These women were fully aware of this handicap in the labour market and were therefore resigned to remaining domestic servants for the rest of their working lives. This is not as bleak as it first appears, inadequate wages was a real issue but they enjoyed the work and most had close personal relationships with their employers. However, these domestic workers were aware of the precariousness of their positions. None had pension provisions and all declined to answer my question of what they would do when they had to retire or their employer no longer needed them. I was told, 'It's best not to think about it'.

Although not prepared to consider the future, all the domestic servants I interviewed were preoccupied with their living arrangements. Standards and location of their accommodation were major concerns. Lack of safety in the townships was a pressing worry. An employer told me that her maid's twelve year old daughter had been raped in the township whilst her mother was at work. The levels of crime, particularly amongst the black population, are amongst the highest in the world. Women are the

most vulnerable. *The Economist* (2001) quoted figures that estimate one woman is killed by her partner every six days. Between 17-25% of South African women are alleged to be in abusive relationships. However, of the 2.2mil crimes reported to the police in 1998 nearly 50% of them remained undetected. The highest numbers of cases to reach court were those relating to drink driving and drugs. Conversely, only 46% of murder, 45% rape and 7.5% car-jacking cases reached the South African courts. The domestic workers' fears of safety for themselves and families were undoubtedly legitimate ones.

Despite the low success rate for serious crime, the cost of crime prevention is another major drain on South Africa's reserves. The police budget in 2001 has been set at R15.5 bil. Most of the crimes committed are still predominantly within the black community, however the effects of these soaring figures have international repercussions. South Africa's panoramic landscapes are an attractive venue for the tourist industry. The potential earnings for South Africa could significantly ease the tensions in respect of balance of payments deficits, encourage investment and create much needed employment for the South African economy. In summary, tourism would seem an obvious vehicle to accelerate and improve economic growth. This in turn could increase government's funds to alleviate poverty, improve household facilities and health care and raise standards in schools and skills in the work force. All of which would work to enhance the 'quality of life' of domestic workers. There is however, 'the spectre at the feast' – South Africa's crime figures. Tourists may well decide against South Africa for a holiday destination because of fears for their personal safety. Domestic servants' perception of crime is centred on its potential threat to themselves and their families. There is little comprehension that these high

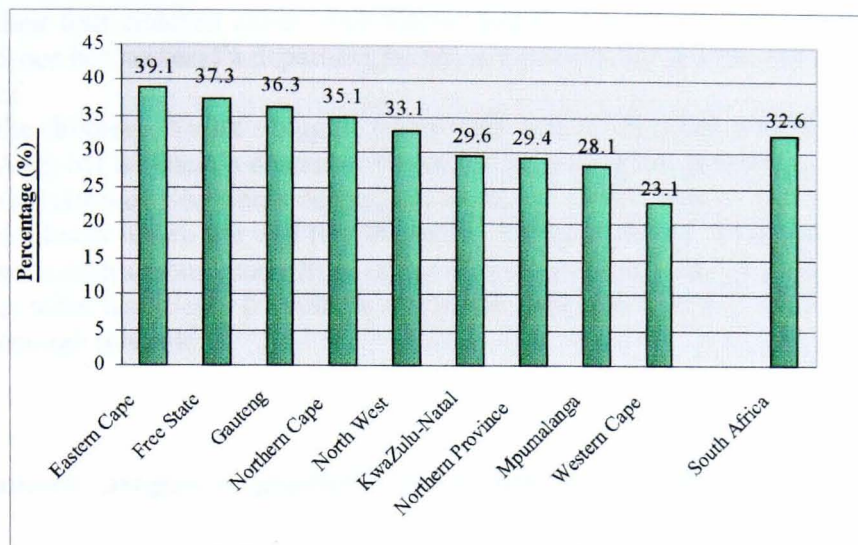
crime figures may indirectly be a factor in restricting government initiatives to improve both their living and working conditions.

(ii) Contextualisation of the lives of domestic servants:

The quantitative data of this section of the chapter is based on statistics compiled by *Statistics South Africa*⁸ (1998). The words and details of my interviewees' lives will be set against the data. The utilisation of quantitative data is in some ways a 'two-edged sword'. On the one hand, it is an effective method to explicitly quantify the wider societal forces that are entrapping domestic workers, both in their employment choices and their vulnerability in the domestic service relationship. This type of data also enables me to consider patterns and trends in the lives of domestic servants per se, rather than just exclusively focusing on the small numbers of women in my sample. However, on the other hand, with statistics, there is the temptation to allow the numerical information to supersede the fact that the figures are only representative of real people. Using quantitative data without supporting it with qualitative detail could result in yet another site to depersonalise domestic workers. Adding the 'voices' of my interviewees, will be a reaffirmation that the statistics presented not only detail universal experiences but are at the same time an amalgamation of individual realities.

⁸ In an address to the South African Parliament on 5 February 1999 Mandela referred specifically to this quantitative data. He stated, 'Census 96, whose results was made public last year [1998], has for the first time given South Africa a detailed and comprehensive portrait of itself.'

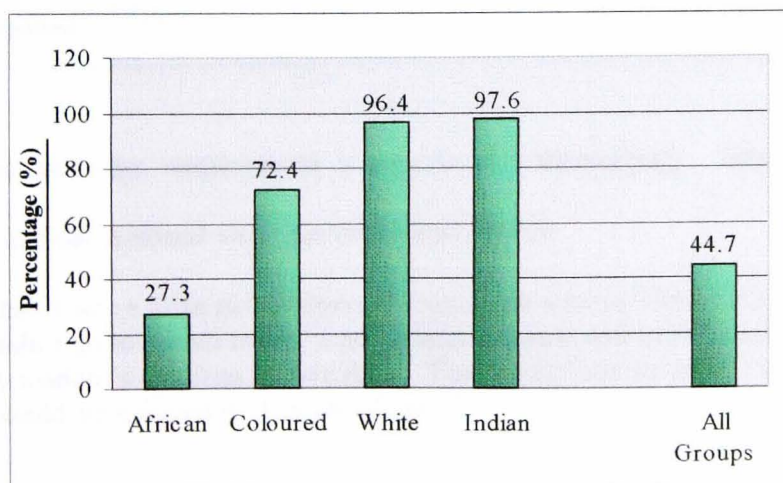
Percentage of households living in two or fewer rooms by province and South Africa overall – Oct 1996.



Sarah lives with her five children in two rooms in a township near Grahamstown.

When you have a lot of kids you worry. If you pray and think of God it helps, but you never know. You have to accept God has given you this. You mustn't think why God give me this. You know, when you try to be a Christian everything's much better, everyone's much happier. [...] God gives me some things sometimes.

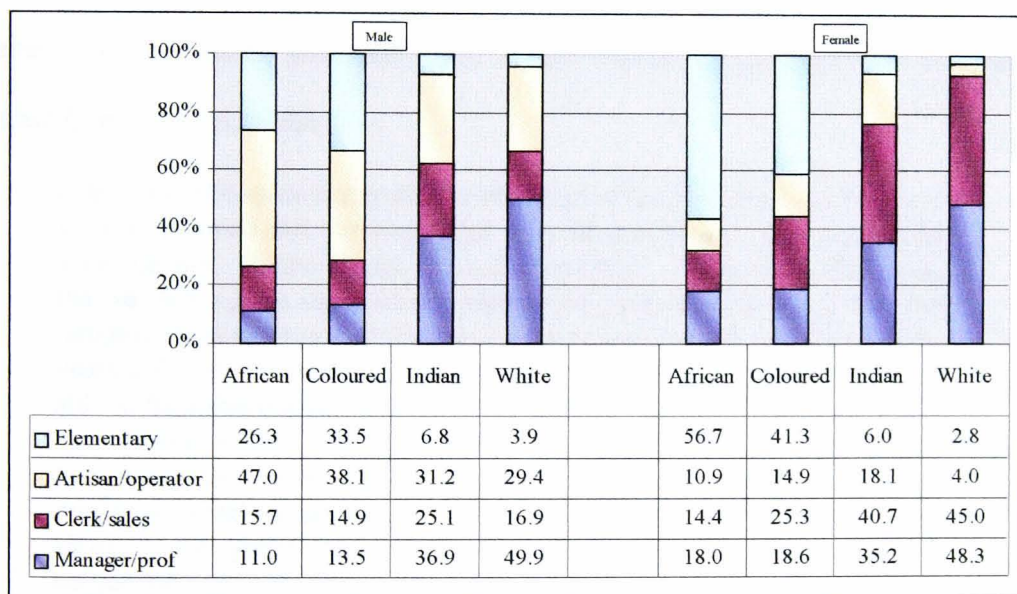
Percentage of households with taps inside the dwelling by population group – Oct 1996.



Violet lives in a shantytown near to Johannesburg. The following is an extract from my field notes:

Violet's situation is critical. Her husband has left her and she now rears their four children alone. Her eldest child is twelve and the youngest is four. Since her husband's departure, he has not contributed at all to the maintenance of the children. Violet's biggest worry right now is her living conditions. After her husband's desertion Violet had no choice but to move to a shantytown. She wants desperately to get out of the 'shacks' but does not know where she will find the money to build a home. (The shacks are constructions made from scrap corrugated iron, with no water, electricity or toilet facilities). It could be worse, she says, she is still fit and strong enough to work.

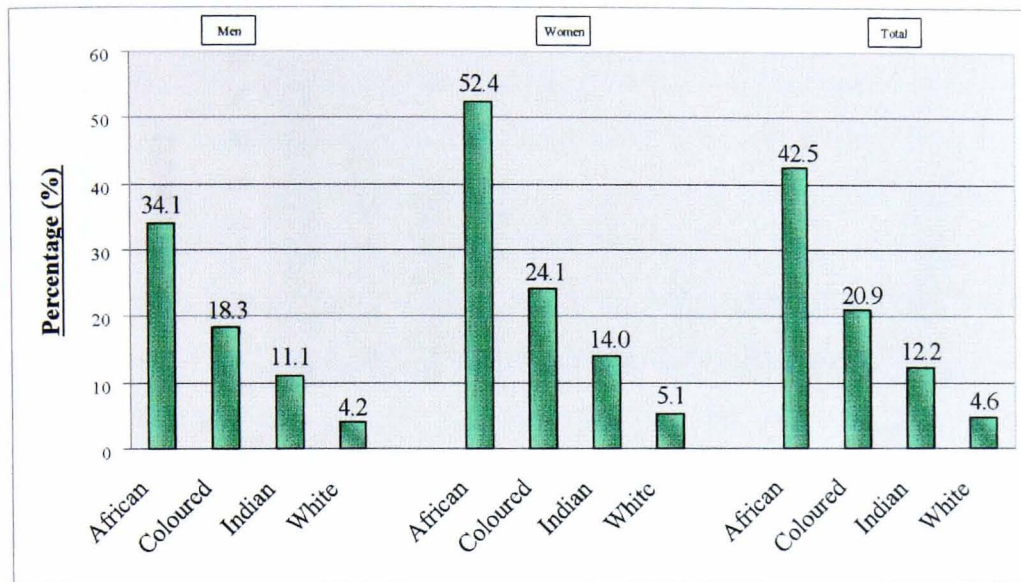
Occupational category by population group and gender – Oct 1996.



Anna lives with her employer in a suburb of Johannesburg. She has recently remarried and her husband visits her from time to time.

When I was a little girl, I dreamed I would be a nurse when I grew up. I didn't go to school much. I never learnt to read and write. I look after my madam's children. I love them. That's a bit like nursing. I know I would've enjoyed it. I'm too old now.

Unemployment rates by population group and gender – October 1996

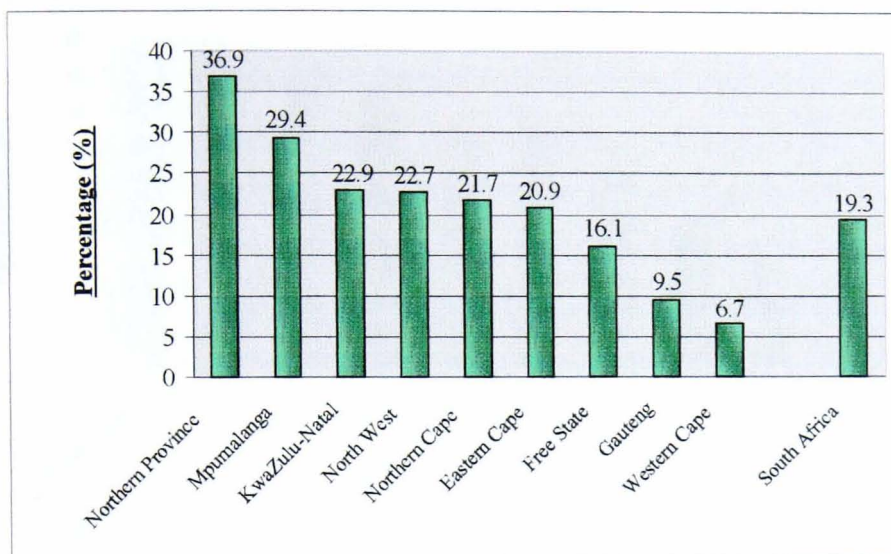


Claire is a forty-seven year old white single woman employing three servants.

Extract from interview notes:

Claire found it quite ironic that at this time of her life when her finances were so strained that she was employing three servants —two maids and a garden boy. “From choice I wouldn’t do this”. Claire went onto explain that she felt a great sense of responsibility to help her servants. “If I didn’t employ them what would they do?” As Alvera [maid] was fifty-eight years old Claire worried that if she did not employ her, she would not be able to find alternative work. Her second maid, Jane was thirty years of age. Claire would rather not employ her at all. Having paid for her education as a child Claire stated she felt responsible for Jane’s welfare, and was concerned what would happen to her if she “just sat around in the township all day”. Her garden boy was now old and the little she gave him helped alleviate his dire poverty.

Percentage of the population aged 20 years or more with no education in each province and South Africa overall – Oct 1996.



Bertha was a fifty-one year old illiterate maid living in a township near to Grahamstown.

They're running classes in the township to teach people like me to read and write.

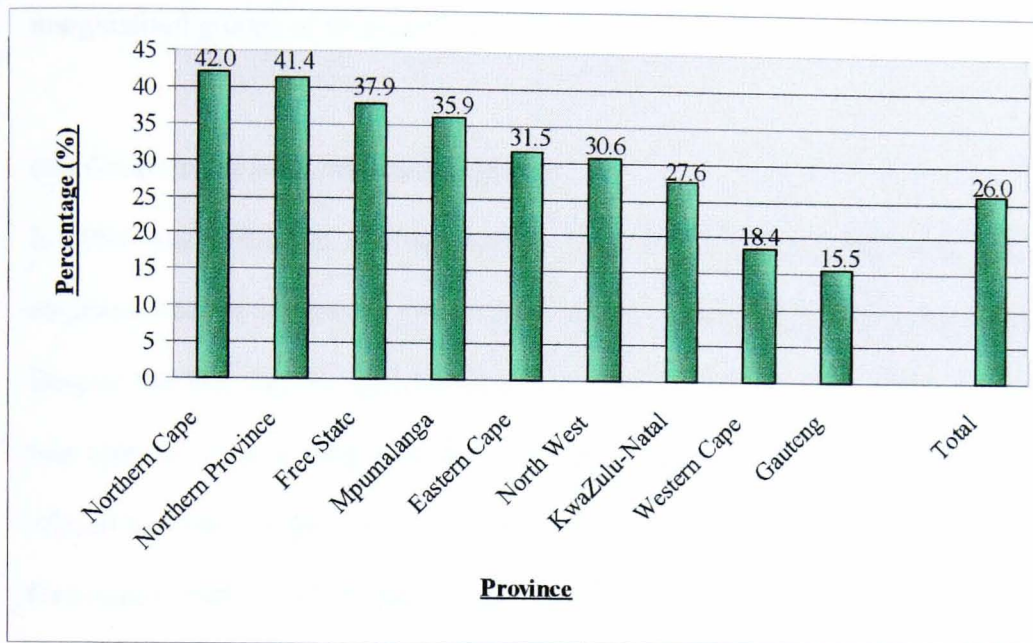
Why don't you go?

The classes are only on during the day and I have to work.

Couldn't you get time off to go?

No response.

Percentage of employed people earning R500 per month or less by province – October 1996.



Jane has a teaching diploma but is unable to find work as a teacher. She works for Claire for two days a week.

Claire has always been kind to me. She paid for my education. I thought if I studied hard I would get a job as a teacher. I am so bitter – after all this there is nothing. I work for Claire two days a week and she gives me a little money. But I just can't manage. I need a pair of shoes. I haven't got the money for shoes. I live with my sister and her family. There is no room for me, but where else can I go?

The figures together with the personal experiences of my interviewees depict a picture of significant socio-economic problems. Many of the domestic workers I interviewed had inadequate housing, but because of their poor wages did not have the personal funds to rectify their situations. All the women I interviewed were the main financial providers for their families and the possibility of help from their extended families was remote. The amelioration of their living conditions is therefore dependent on the direct intervention of state bodies. The entrapping wider social forces have to be lifted on their behalf from above. In these circumstances, top-down initiatives are the

only realistic option if their lives are to be improved. In the next section of the chapter, the South African government's strategies to alleviate the deprivation of the marginalised groups of its society will be discussed.

(iii) Government initiatives and strategies:

In 1994 when Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) took office the emphasis was on improvements in social services, housing and access to education. Despite the fact that the socio-economic problems were immense, the way forward was seen as a partnership between the private sector, labour and government. The official line was a triple alliance between the ANC, COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP) but this has been severely strained. The government has had to woo the business community and this has undoubtedly taken precedence in many government decisions. The gold and diamond mines were not nationalised and land was not seized for redistribution. The controversies of Zimbabwe's land reclamation sanctioned by Mugabe reverberate in South Africa, but neither Mandela nor Mbeki have indicated that seizure of land is an option to alleviate the high percentage of poverty in the rural areas⁹. Mandela's initial economic agenda was the 'Reconstruction and Development Programme' (RDP). This was Keynesian in orientation, that is, through a mixture of fiscal and public sector spending, redistribution of income and expenditure into improving the infrastructure, was seen as the means of rebuilding the 'new South Africa'. However, taxation could not resolve by itself all of South Africa's social ills. Mandela needed to ensure that the white business community did not leave, as it was through them that initially economic growth could be achieved. Excessive taxation could result in a protraction

⁹ Land redistribution is to be achieved through a three-pronged legal framework. (i) willing-seller-willing-buyer basis or compensation at market-value when expropriation is justified. (ii) reform of the tenure system. (iii) restore land to people or the descendants who had land taken in the 80 years after

of the economic stagnation of the 1970s and 1980s. Conversely, increased public sector spending could result in inflationary pressures in the economy and further devaluation of the rand.

PIR (1998) asserts that by 1996 it was realised that revised macroeconomic initiatives had to be implemented in order to realise the aims of addressing poverty, income differentials, creating employment and financing essential social services. Couched in terms of a regional African Renaissance the economic strategy was shifted to growth, employment and redistribution (GEAR). Mbeki in his accession as President in 1999 has kept with this revised economic policy. He stated, 'To focus on redistribution at the expense of an expanding economy is a sure path to the universalism of poverty' (Rachleff, 2000: 5). The target for economic growth, as earlier indicated by PIR in their recommendations, needs to be 6% per annum, if South Africa is to comprehensively meet its socio-economic problems. Rachleff (2000) argues that the 'rank and file' workers are seeing little evidence of economic growth and as a consequence no significant redistribution of income. It is the new black elite, who has achieved the lucrative employment positions, and is perceived to be the beneficiary of the minor shift in wealth allocation.

Having prioritised economic growth as the vehicle to alleviate social inequalities, this inevitably will take time. The factors that are imperatives to accelerated growth as outlined by PIR are such things as investment and efficiency of that investment. PIR (1998) indicates that a major challenge to South Africa's recovery has been 'unfavourable savings behaviour'.

[...] during the 1980s the level of savings available to finance investment declined dramatically, from over 30% of GDP in 1979-80 to 16.5% in 1996 government savings declined most drastically, from savings of 6.1% of GDP to dis-savings of 3-5% of GDP in the

late 1970s to 19.2% in 1996. [...] Increasing the rate of economic growth thus requires a recovery of investment and savings [...] The crucial issue is the extent of government saving required in the context of the multiple challenges of economic growth, poverty and inequality that South Africa faces.

GEAR's economic agenda requires 'trade-offs'. Adhering to its aim of sustained economic growth inflation control is an integral component to the strategy. High inflation can only serve to exacerbate the conditions of poverty. The price of inflation control in the short term usually realised in the reduction of levels of employment and output. The net outcome for those living in poverty is the maintenance of the status quo, that is, their living conditions have not worsened, but neither have they significantly improved. Advocating patience is not a viable option for government, as the soaring crime figures would seem to intimate, that economic deprivation is manifesting itself in social malfunction.

The Economist's (2001) survey figures are not encouraging. These indicate that growth rates have not even reached the 'modest rates of the 1970s (an annual average of 3.3%), which is far short of the desired 6%. Jobs have disappeared and any income redistribution has been matched with increasing inequality. As PIR so rightly indicated, economic growth, even if achieved at the desired rate, is not a guarantee of improvements in the lives of the marginalised groups of South African society. If South African industry moves further towards capital intensity rather than labour intensity, job opportunities will be for the specialised rather than the majority. The large pools of unskilled labour have to be trained. However, if resources are waiting on economic growth, then that essential training may not be achieved. The economic situation becomes one of a 'Catch 22', as economic growth to a certain extent will be reliant on the quality of its workforce.

Labour strategies do not seem to be providing or producing a highly skilled workforce.

The framework for increasing employment in GEAR focuses on supporting a competitive and more labour-intensive growth path through wage moderation and increasing employment flexibility. While GEAR does not define precisely what is meant by 'labour market flexibility', the implications of this particularly at the lower end of the wage distribution, are worth considering. Employment flexibility (e.g. the use of contract and casual labour) is increasing in South African industry, increasing the danger that, while labour flexibility may increase jobs, these are likely to be of a lower quality, and worker insecurity may be increased (PIR 1998).

PIR further indicates that there is an emphatic segregation in South Africa's labour market. In addition to its formal and informal sectors, the formal sector is segmented into primary and secondary labour markets. Black South African women are heavily situated in the informal and secondary labour markets. Domestic service is the highest employer of African women, that is, between 1-2 mil, but its positioning in the labour market is not clear. Many domestic workers have to be classed as working in the informal sector as pay and conditions are unregulated and often undocumented. The trend I noted in Grahamstown of many domestic workers no longer having accommodation with their employers would appear to be an obvious advantage to them. To reiterate the earlier point, they are no longer 'permanently available' for their employers. However, living at a distance from the employer clearly facilitates informality in the work arrangement, as the employer is less accountability to monitoring bodies such as the Department of Labour. If we specifically consider GEAR's flexible employment strategy, domestic servants are highly likely to be casualties in this type of policy. Domestic service is a site where casual labour with low marketable skills could flourish. The development of a personal relationship between the employer and domestic worker would to some extent offset the potential temporary tendencies of the occupation. The onus therefore remains with the servant to sell their 'personhood' as part of their labour.

The acquirement of marketable skills would seem an essential strategy for domestic workers if they are to be able to seek alternative employment. As discussed in the Introduction, the Grahamstown Area District Relief Association (GADRA) was, as of 1999, involved in local schemes to retrain domestic servants for alternative work. Its motivation being the possible implementation of a legalised minimum wage in the sector. GADRA was assuming that this would result in significant numbers of employers dismissing their servants. Ironically then, the local initiative was not to offer viable employment alternatives to domestic servants, but rather to offset a worsening economic situation for these women. Irrespective of the motivation for instigating such schemes, this would seem a way forward to assist domestic workers in acquiring additional skills to those of domestic ones. Particularly for younger women vocational training has to be a step forward. The national picture is not however encouraging. PIR (1998) again,

South Africa has one of the poorest human resources indices in the world, in terms of both the skill levels of the workforce and the resource spent on training. [...] to meet this need, the Department of Labour's Skills Development Strategy for Economic Growth provides for funding of training by employers via a pay roll levy [...]

All of which is centred on the primary labour market and will not aid people to move out of the informal sector. Therefore, domestic service is yet again not being touched by direct economic strategies.

As so many domestic servants are living in poverty, it is not only employment initiatives that are important to them. Social policies to alleviate their living conditions are an imperative. *The Economist* (2001) in its survey considers both housing and education. In these areas, there are some encouraging signs.

The government says that thanks to its efforts since 1994, some 9m more people have access to clean water and about 1.5m more households have access to electricity. Moreover, it has built nearly 1m houses for people who have had no formal shelter before. It

has provided a free peanut butter sandwich a day to every child at primary school, ensuring a minimum of nutrition. And it has introduced basic pensions for the elderly poor. It can take some pride in these figures [...]

Putting these figures in a wider framework, out of 10.7mil households 3mil of them, as of 2001, do not have electricity. In respect of access to clean water, 8mil out of 43mil are still without this provision. The government to a certain extent is hampered by the fact that South Africa is federal state with nine provincial governments. Its strategies are therefore not always ones of direct intervention, rather the implementation of action initiatives are left for the local authorities to fulfil. Local Governments have not always been proactive in meeting their agendas and obligations. For example, the Eastern Cape, which is controlled by the ANC, the housing budget for the 2000 fiscal year was virtually unused. In his address to Parliament February 1999, Mandela admitted that ‘this level of government has often played itself out as an Achilles’ heel of democratic governance [...] The public is justified in demanding better service [...]’. National government will therefore not only have to be the powerhouse to drive through social reform but also act as policemen at the local level to ensure that improvement targets are reached.

Education is high on the government agenda as a means to ameliorate social inequality. As such, it is the highest expenditure item in the national budget. It will take 21% of government spending in 2000-2001, which will equate to 5.7% of GDP. The overall outcome is that primary education across the board is good. The picture becomes more mixed for secondary education and even ‘more troubled’ for universities (The Economist: 2001). Basic education is essential for domestic servants as their marginalisation is exacerbated because of their illiteracy. An improvement in the accessibility and standard of primary education will be positive in

the longer term for this sector of employment. However, if economic growth is harnessed to a significant number of workers being highly skilled and trained universities' poor performances are a matter of concern. Having prioritised growth as a means to facilitate South Africa's social reform policies GEAR will have to address these higher education deficiencies. Basic education is only one of the steps to improving the lives of domestic servants, their living conditions and access to alternative employment opportunities are also essential requirements. Accelerated economic growth, as PIR (1998) has asserted, is needed to significantly reduce poverty levels. Indirectly the lack of higher education achievements could be a factor in delaying or reducing the levels of social reforms necessary to improve the living conditions of domestic workers.

In his address to the World Economic Forum 29 January 1999 Mandela reflected on his term of office, which was to end in the summer of that year.

South Africa knew from the outset that reconstruction and development would be even more difficult than the defeat of the apartheid system. I cannot report that we have succeeded in all our endeavours in South Africa. Yet a great deal has been achieved in the first five years of democracy in the face of many difficulties.

The scale of socio-economic problems that faced Mandela and the ANC made it an impossible task for them to be resolved in the short term. The evidence is that progress has been made in the areas targeted such as housing, education and social service provision but at a slower rate than desired. Economic growth has not accelerated and the government has had significant drains on its resources because of escalating HIV-positive and crime levels. Employment opportunities through the emphasis on flexibility have encouraged casual arrangements, consequently the acquiring of skills has not been a high priority, and the tenure of employment for many is less secure. Income inequalities, which are the supreme terrain for ideologies

of difference to flourish, are still in the higher echelons of the world's economies. Domestic servants, because of their relatively poor wages, will have to be heavily reliant on direct state intervention for such things as home improvements. For example, many of my interviewees were without bathrooms and were unable to install them because of their inadequate wages. The power differential in the domestic service relationship is still enhanced because of the extreme inequalities in wealth distribution. The next section of this chapter will consider trade union activity and labour legislation in order to ascertain their impact on the domestic service relationship.

(iv) Trade union activity and labour legislation:

Callinicos's (1981) examination of labour, during the apartheid years describes it in terms of 'racial capitalism'. The significant point is that labour control and segregation was achieved through a racial framework. In the 1960s, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was banned, as was the ANC and SACP. The legalised black trade unions were to develop as political and social groups for the ending of apartheid. The liberation struggle became the cohesive force for the black community. Many of the black trade union leadership were to take up political appointments in 1994. Black South African women were active in the freedom struggle and consequently not dormant in their trade union membership. Prof. Peter Rachleff (2000: 2), a visiting American labour activist to South Africa in January 2000, writing in *Safundi: the Journal of South African and American Comparative studies*, asserts that unions within South Africa have 'atrophied'. This malaise of trade unionism has had repercussions for female members. The South African Domestic Service Union (SADWU) was disbanded in 1996 due to financial irregularities and has not been reformed. Rachleff (2000) further argues that there is

a widening gap between leaders and members within unions, which has seriously impeded collective action.

The implementation of GEAR has met with token protests. COSATU has organised demonstrations on bank holidays and Sundays but have been reticent to call for strikes, slow downs or other direct action, either against employers or the government.

Rachleff (2000: 5) concludes the following:

By the late 1990s, as Mandela was turning over the reins to Sussex-University trained Mbeki the labour movement appeared to be crumbling before what seemed to be the ineluctable forces of economic neo-liberalism. Globalisation, privatisation, deregulation, free trade and flexibility were becoming the watchwords of South Africa, and the range of responses available to the once powerful labour movement appeared to run from outright accommodation to symbolic resistance.

As the quantitative figures from section (ii) of this chapter have shown, the unemployment figures amongst black Africans, particularly women are high. COSATU has clearly been unable to challenge the government in its economic policies and therefore has tacitly accepted that unemployment in the short term cannot be reduced by any action on their part. Domestic servants are therefore relatively unprotected by the umbrella of trade union membership. Rachleff (2000: 8) noted that women were using other vehicles, such as informal discussion groups, to come together to share experiences and vocalise their needs and aspirations. It was Rachleff's opinion that such meetings were the embryonic stages of new domestic service organisations. In Grahamstown (1999)) all the domestic servants I interviewed were not involved in any informal or formal organisations for their occupation.

The most promising potential for collective action was situated in Grahamstown's domestic service agency. The agency, as of 1999, was a recent venture for Helen the

owner, and all of the four agency workers had previously worked for individual employers. The intimacy and camaraderie of the agency workers was pronounced and there were definite indicators that they were beginning to question their marginalised positions. The following is an extract from my collective interview with the workers:

What is the best part of your job?

I can say anything when we are all together. We laugh, the work's better. We all do different things but we must finish at the same time. I've finished now and she's also busy, so I go help her. All day there is no problem. Sharing our work is what we like. Working together is the best for us all.

I followed this interview with a discussion with Helen the agency owner. She informed me that the only times that her workers 'gave her trouble' was when she split them up to go to work at different venues. 'They really do not like being asked to work by themselves any more'. In my next meeting with the agency workers, I asked them if they would ever consider working for a 'madam' again. All of them were adamant that they would not as they much preferred the work arrangements of the domestic service agency. One of the women said, "I would have to be really desperate if I ever went back to that again". The women's commitment to agency work was because they enjoyed one another's company. However, all the women were starting to question their living arrangements, were working on strategies to hide their money from male partners and had realised that isolated working arrangements were not the most favourable of working conditions. In summary, their collective experience of work was starting to become a forum to realise their exploited positions, both as domestic workers in singular domestic service relationships and as a marginalised group in South African society.

COSATU has had success in its pressure on government for legislative reform on behalf of domestic and farm workers. In an article in the *Johannesburg Mail and Guardian* 25 August 1997 it highlighted the fact that South Africa was witnessing the most protracted series of strikes since the ANC's victory in 1994. The article states:

In what has become a bitter fight to the end, South African unions last week engaged in mass action to force their will on a new piece of labour legislation. Tempers have been flaring over the Basic Conditions of Employment bill [...] What is distinctive about this action is that it is against legislation or proposals by the government. It is not against employers as much as it is against government.

The unions were protesting the fact that the government, because of its GEAR agenda was favouring business over improved terms for labour. As economic growth is the lynchpin of the economic strategy, high productivity rates are fundamental to the objective. COSATU's demands for a shorter working week and extended maternity leave were not conducive to business's agenda of higher productivity. A cynic would argue that COSATU's apparent success in the inclusion of farm and domestic workers in the ambit of BCEA was granted because these measures did not interfere with GEAR's overall strategy. It is significant that BCEA's original standards on the working week and maternity leave were not amended to meet the demands of labour. For example, COSATU was demanding a forty hour week rather than a forty-five hour week, and six months maternity leave rather than four – these changes were not achieved.

Irrespective of the overall successes or failures of organised labour in negotiations with state, the inclusion of domestic servants in labour legislation has to be positive for this sector of employment. To iterate, the two acts that now have direct relevance for domestic service, are BCEA 1994 and Labour Relations Act (LRA) 1995. The specific details of BCEA are set out in Appendix 3. The important points I will emphasis here. BCEA became law as early as 1983; 1994 is the year that farm

workers and domestic workers came under the same protection as other workers. It is often mistakenly assumed that it was LRA, and not BCEA that secured maximum working hours, overtime rates, and paid leave for employees. This is not so, all of these rights have been in place since BCEA 1983, but had not been comprehensively implemented for black workers until the ANC's accession in 1994. Key features of BCEA for all workers include, a formal contract of employment, set hours of work and overtime rates, entitlement to paid holidays, public holidays and maternity leave. Bringing domestic service into the jurisdiction of BCEA was an attempt to formalise the work arrangements of domestic workers and give them protected legal rights. In summary, it aimed to reduce the exploitable practices of employers through a legal framework.

The focus of the LRA is the regulation of negotiations between employers and unions. It also protects workers from unfair dismissals, and other unfair labour practices. The LRA replaces legislation of 1956, and what is significant about it, is that it now offers protection to both domestics and farm workers. This is not to say that employers cannot now dismiss their employees, but to do so they have to prove that the termination of employment was fair. There are three categories of fair dismissal; misconduct, incapacity that includes such things as poor work standards or ill health, or retrenchment situations. (There are guidelines for the procedures of fair dismissals in schedule 8 of the LRA). All the employers I interviewed in Grahamstown were unclear about the distinctions between the two Acts, and their major concern appeared to be the difficulties in dismissing 'unsuitable' servants. All were aware that there was a legal requirement on their part to have a contract of employment with their servants but chose to ignore this. Employers, without any reference to legally set

standards, also determined holidays and whether to allow their employees to take public bank holidays.

In my discussions with the Helen, domestic service agency owner, she was firmly convinced that fear of labour legislation was producing a gap in the labour market for her type of operation. In her opinion, employers believed that it was now extremely difficult to terminate contracts. She related the following incident in her own life to substantiate her assertion.

I came home one day to find her [maid] dead drunk on our double bed, and our little toddler running around the house by herself. When we knocked on the door my little one said very sweetly, “Mummy I can’t get Jessica [maid] to wake up.” Now that scared me half to death. One particular reason is that I love my daughter very much and I had visions of her dead. You know you imagine all sorts of things that could have happened. And secondly, I can’t have any more children so Samantha is my first and last. She’s everything. And of course I just popped. I’m afraid I have a terrible temper when I don’t control it [...] I fired Jessica. Any way, on Monday morning Jessica arrived with her family and a representative from the Labour Department, and stated I had wrongfully dismissed her.

But I said, “Hold on you were drunk. I have not wrongfully dismissed you. I cannot have a maid looking after a four year old who gets drunk”

“Oh, but it was the first time.” [Helen is here referring to the interjection in the conversation by the Labour Department’s representative.]

“Oh no but it wasn’t. She’d been acting peculiarly for the last six months. I had not figured out what it was. I’m afraid I’ve found bottles stashed all over the house, and I simply cannot employ this maid.”

“You’ve wrongfully dismissed her. You should have had her arrested and thrown in jail.”

Anyway I ended up having to pay her an extra month’s wages, holiday pay, I don’t know. It ended up as quite a sum by the time they had finished with me and we came to an agreement. Then the laws weren’t so strict, now they are. Can you imagine if someone was caught stealing a glass or cup of coffee? You would have to get the police every time to prove you were not wrongfully dismissing this person.

The advantage from this type of business, she claimed, was that as far as the employer was concerned the arrangement was a casual one with the entire onus on the agency to

meet the legal requirements. It is difficult to verify her claims. There were large numbers of domestic servants unemployed in the area and as stated elsewhere, GADRA officials were convinced that if a minimum wage was made legally binding that unemployment in the sector would dramatically increase.

My assessment was that the fear by employers of labour legislation in this sector was on the whole unfounded. The tenets of BCEA were largely ignored and the power of LRA was overestimated. The forty-five domestic service disputes arbitrated by the Department of Labour officials for the period January-July 1999 period were a relatively small number. This fact does not indicate that domestic service relationships were predominantly harmonious, rather that domestic servants were not seeking redress through a legal framework. High unemployment together with illiteracy would discourage domestic workers from approaching monitoring bodies to improve their standards of work. Any jobs, irrespective of how untenable the pay and conditions are, are preferable to no job at all. Domestic servants will therefore need external intervention on their behalf before this labour legislation will be upheld. An inspection of individual work situations is not a viable option on two counts. Firstly, the logistics of such an operation are impractical. It is estimated that there are between 1-2 mil domestic workers in South Africa, and as such their place of work are unlikely to be inspected. Secondly, this place of employment is also the private domain of the employer, and they have the legal right to privacy. PIR (1998) implicitly acknowledges that implementation of minimum standards by state in domestic service will be limited. 'The Basic Conditions of Employment Bill will directly improve the living and working conditions of workers. However, it will have limited impact on the vulnerable workers in domestic service and the informal sector'. The 'goodwill' of the employer is the only practical vehicle to ameliorate the pay and conditions in this sector.

Recent labour legislation has focused on positive discrimination in the workplace in order to facilitate black career advancement. The specific acts are Employment Equity Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2000.

The Employment Equity Act aims not to impose quotas but to ensure that “designated employers” – those in the private sector that employ over 50 people or have a turnover above a certain threshold should obtain “demographic proportionality” (black Africans make up some 70% of the workforce, women 45% and the disabled perhaps 5%) (The Economist 2001).

Each of these ‘designated’ employers has to draw up a profile of their workforce showing the breakdown of race, sex and disability. Plans must then be implemented to attain ‘reasonable progress’ to equity. The Equality Act takes precedence over all laws except the constitution. Its aim is to reinforce the constitutional ban on all forms of discrimination and identifies potentially unfair practices in a variety of contexts. These Acts undoubtedly are facilitating the establishment and growth of a black bourgeoisie. In its creation, there is the aim of removing the bastion of white hierarchies in employment structures. Any ensuing empowerment will be for the higher echelons of black labour and will leave relatively untouched the marginalised sectors of the workforce. Only those who are ‘suitably’ qualified will be eligible for ‘equitable representation’. Illiteracy, irrespective of the work location is in many instances an impenetrable barrier to employment driven advancement. Illiteracy amongst domestic servants is still a real issue and the outcome for them of this new legislation is their opportunity for alternative employment remains unaltered and no change in the conditions of work in their current positions.

(v) Conclusion:

The first aim of this chapter was the contextualisation of domestic servants’ lives beyond their work situations. As explained, depersonalisation has been an integral part of many domestic workers’ relationship with their employers, as the ideologies of

difference have been played out against the terrain of income inequalities. The reaffirmation of their 'personhood' was stated through the vehicle of their own 'voices' within the content of the chapter. However, as the overview, government and trade union strategy sections have all demonstrated, domestic workers require others to speak and act on their behalf. Wages in this sector in themselves are insufficient for domestic workers to lift themselves out of the 'morass' of their living conditions. Domestic workers marginalisation is further compounded by the fact that they have relatively few marketable skills. Consequently, these women are 'trapped' in both their occupations and living arrangements. The state will directly have to intervene if the poverty gap that many of them are living in is to lessen.

The input of trade unions into the lives of domestic workers is now primarily an indirect one, as significant numbers of domestic workers have no union affiliations. COSATU was instrumental in achieving the inclusion of domestic workers in the ambit of BCEA. The benefits for domestic workers from their inclusion in the legislation are questionable. Grossman (1997) is unequivocal in the Act's ineffectuality in addressing the needs of this sector. He states:

Domestic workers are most vulnerable at the point of employment where the employer is free to decide whether to employ her and under what terms and conditions. [...] The domestic worker is almost always; desperate for work; with no real alternative/s; isolated [...] and hence with no real 'bargaining power'. The responsibility is on progressive law-makers to interfere with that situation.

Grossman concludes that it is only the 'goodwill' of employers that determines the pay and conditions for these employees. 'Backyard tyranny' is inevitable, as employers are not impeded in their actions by labour legislation. 'Left unchecked, unchallenged and uncontrolled, conditions for domestic service will continue to reproduce what needs to be changed'. Affirmative action for these marginalised

workers cannot be immediately addressed in their workplace situations. The power differential between employers and their servants must initially be challenged by the alleviation of some of the wider entrapping societal forces.

The second aim of the chapter was to quantify these external factors, as there is a direct relationship between the levels of vulnerability of domestic workers and the potential for their exploitation. Grossman (1997) asserts that even apparent 'progressive' employers in other areas of economic life are extremely abusive in their relationships with their servants. Empowerment comes through increased choices in employment opportunities and the development of marketable skills. In addition, as the workers in the domestic service agency demonstrated, collectivity should be encouraged as a means to strengthen these workers. Forums, irrespective of whether these are formal or informal, are the grounding for resistance. Before domestic workers can seek resolutions to their exploitation, they have to be aware of the questions they should be asking in respect of their circumstances. As atomised workers, feeling inadequate because of their lack of education and training they are more malleable. Adding the question 'why?' to their vocabulary is the first step in them actively seeking change in this sector of employment.

All of which does not negate the societal factors that are entrapping domestic workers into their marginalised positions. It must not be forgotten that South Africa's income differentials are amongst the highest in the world. Domestic workers' recognition of their exploitation is futile without a means of ameliorating their conditions. The most poignant and tragic interview I conducted was with Jane, who was educated but was unable to find employment as a teacher. Her bitterness was acute because she knew her circumstances, had taken steps to 'better herself' but was still 'trapped' in her position because of the wider societal forces that she could not challenge. To reiterate

the earlier point, these external factors will have to be removed by external bodies. GEAR with its agenda harnessed to economic growth will not significantly effect the lives of domestic servants in the short term. As Grossman (1997) so rightly argues, markets can be as tyrannical as individual employers can, and domestic servants could be the casualties as labour flexibility translates into casual and insecure contracts. Social policies are the most viable means of improving the living conditions of these women. However, the implementation of these programmes is often left to the discretion of provincial authorities and is not being pursued at the rate to make a real difference.

A more insidious outcome of these wider societal factors is that they give the façade that employers themselves are powerless to act against them. The reverse is actually true, they are empowered by these external forces. For example, if we consider the figures from Census 96; 52.4% of African women were unemployed; of those that were in employment, 57% of them were in unskilled occupations. In the Eastern Cape 20.9% of people had no education whatsoever. In the words of a domestic worker I interviewed, 'I am just grateful to have a job, there are many sitting in the townships. I can't read, I can't write.' Her employer was her saviour and as such her wishes were sacrosanct. I do not wish to denigrate the employer, who was a kindly woman, however her power to dictate the terms of the relationship was absolute.

The next three chapters of the thesis will present and analyse the fieldwork data with the emphasis on the interrelationship between the employer and servant. The danger of this qualitative approach is centring the power differential exclusively in the person of the employer. This chapter's third aim was to counter this potential pitfall by demonstrating that the weight of employers' power is significantly enhanced by

income differentials, difficulties in applying labour legislation to the sector, and the lack of direct trade union involvement. The ideologies of difference therefore are nourished by the marginalised societal position of domestic workers and used to the employers' advantage. Affirmative action, as dictated by state, will challenge ideological formations for the higher stratum of black labour but will not have significant influence on the lowest.

CHAPTER 4: WHITE EMPLOYERS AND SERVANTS

The next three chapters of the thesis will present and analyse the fieldwork. In all, nine case studies will be examined. The purpose of the fieldwork is to explore domestic service in the Eastern Cape after apartheid's demise. Using Cock's 1979 original research as the benchmark of domestic service under apartheid, I will use her findings as a starting point to my own research. However, I am also seeking to add a different theoretical level to the examination of domestic service, which Cock did not feel was necessary in her original research. Unlike her, I have not sought a representative sample, rather diverse relationships were deliberately chosen to situate my differing theoretical conceptions. Cock exclusively focused on white employers and their servants because one of her major objectives was to prove that domestic service was a 'microcosm' of apartheid. This objective is no longer pertinent with apartheid's passing, therefore I have added non-white employers into my sample. I have a further objective which is, to discover if class differences are manifesting themselves in a similar way to those of race in the interrelationship between employer and servant.

The interviews were in a semi-structured format. Appendix 1 indicates the mix of open and closed questions that I used. Also highlighted are the few identical questions to those of Cock, which have been taken from her original research. These were incorporated to facilitate the comparison of my research to hers. The major departure to Cock is in the analysis of the research findings. I favour a qualitative approach to facilitate the application of the theoretical arguments. All my interviewees were informed that I was a sociologist researching domestic service and that I would be writing a thesis on my findings. I was given permission to tape all my interviews and use the material. As indicated in the methodology section, the

majority of my interviewees were open and relaxed about speaking to me. I deduced two main reasons for this; firstly, the ethos of truth and reconciliation is permeating in many social contexts in South Africa; secondly, many employers have distanced themselves from any personal involvement with apartheid. However, in order to protect identities all names and minor details of the lives of interviewees have been changed. All the domestic workers I interviewed had Xhosa as well as English names. I asked them why they were known by their English names and was told that their Xhosa names were difficult to pronounce if the person could not speak the language. In addition, the Xhosa name had special meanings which they did not want to use whilst at work. For example, names I was told translated into, ‘someone been waited for’ and ‘great joy’. My interviewees all shared their Xhosa names with me, but in respect of their wishes, I have used English names to denote them. The names chosen are reflective of the types of English names the domestic servants were known by.

Each case study will be presented in a similar manner. Profiles of the employers and their servants will be put forward first, before proceeding to examine and analyse the relationship between them. Profiling is integral to the research as it is the means to contextualise the women in relation to one another, and to substantiate the power differential in the relationship. One of the fundamental contradictions for the domestic worker is that she is simultaneously depersonalised by the employer, yet her ‘personhood’ is demanded as part of the labour she provides. The profiles of each party in the relationship are necessary if this type of contradiction is to be exposed. For example, the personal details of the domestic worker set against her treatment by her employer will reveal if depersonalisation is occurring and if her ‘personhood’ is being demanded.

In this chapter, I will examine the domestic service relationships of an Afrikaner employer, English-speaking employer and a rural employer to their Xhosa servants. The major point to emphasise with these three case studies is that they are the most similar to that of Cock's. In addition to the research site being a replication of Cock's, the employers are also white, situated in the urban and rural areas of Grahamstown, and the servants are all poorly educated and of the same ethnic origin. These were the common features of her case studies. Therefore, there is a solid base for starting my analysis by a comparison to some of her research findings. Another useful measure of domestic service during and after apartheid is if the domestic worker has been with the same employer during the transition, or failing this, a worker in the sector through the period. Each of the three domestic workers has been in this type of employment for a minimum of twenty years. The Afrikaner employer has been beset with 'problems' with her servants, and her 'new' maid has only been in her employ for approximately a year. In the other two case studies the domestic workers have been with the same employer for numerous years, however none of the interviewees could quite remember the exact number of years together.

Case Study 1: Afrikaner employer and Xhosa maid.

(1)–(i) Employer's profile: - Brenda.

This house was part of a small group of houses enclosed by a perimeter wall. It was a detached property with a garage, but so close to the adjoining houses that at first I thought it was a linked-detached connected by the garages. The garden was small and compact. The neighbours on one side were black and on the other were coloured. Brenda remarked that the coloureds were 'far worse than the blacks', because according to Brenda, her coloured neighbours were quite rowdy, and the noise they

made was quite intrusive to her own home. The home itself consisted of a kitchen, lounge, dining room, bathroom, and two bedrooms. All the furniture seemed of good quality and the house itself appeared spotless. Brenda was thirty-two years of age as was her husband Richard. She and her husband were both Afrikaans, and had a three-year-old son called Troy. Brenda was a clerk for the local bank and Richard was a security officer for a local company. Both had grown up with domestic servants and from the beginning of their marriage seven years ago, they had sought to get a 'good one'. This had been difficult as the attitudes of domestic servants are changing – many 'do not know their place'. Brenda reflecting back on her experiences with three or four previous servants states:

She [**previous maid**] was the same age as me but she was, how can I say, more dressed properly than me, like a lady, but you know she was working for me. When we moved in here, she used not to do the work properly. When I asked her to go and do other things she would come and sit and watch TV with me. When I was on maternity leave she was not on maternity leave. I looked after Troy all night I had to rest, she watches TV.

Did she watch TV all the time?

No, only when she had a break. She does not do it properly or right [**housework**] so she must go.

There was one that took chances.

What do you mean took chances?

It's like I ask her to clean Troy's room. I will go back and I will check it, and it is still dirty. There were bits, which weren't clean. The windows still looked dirty. But if I tell her something she would talk back to me, she'd say, "Yes, but I have done it, why must I do it again?" I didn't need that from her.

Was she older than you?

No, she was the same age as me, but she has a child older than Troy. For us, we plan our family but they don't, they don't look after them like we do, they leave them. Because her child was older than Troy she assumed she was older than me. The best nannies are the old nannies, like Jessie [**current maid**]. She is lovely. Older domestics they work. If you tell

them to do a thing they go and do it, they don't talk back, The younger ones are the problem.

Brenda informed me she needed to work because two salaries were required to meet their financial commitments. Richard helped around the house, and all finances were jointly discussed and worked out together. Each was aware of what the other earned. However, the decision as to what to pay the domestic was entirely Brenda's, as Richard left the details of the arrangements to his wife. Despite the difficulties of finding a satisfactory employee Brenda, because she was a woman in full-time employment, would have carried on searching to find someone suitable to take care of the housework. Jessie was the first satisfactory domestic Richard and Brenda have had. Jessie worked one day a week for an older Afrikaans couple. This couple recently retired from their farm and no longer needed Jessie full-time. Brenda had received a telephone call from them asking if they needed a reliable servant. Brenda was so desperate for someone that she decided not to interview her. Richard agreed with this decision, and after picking Jessie up so they could meet her, encouraged Brenda to immediately employ her.

Brenda did not use familial ideology to describe her relationship with Jessie. Jessie was described as a close family friend, whom Brenda was extremely pleased was a single woman. This meant that she and Richard could take her on holiday with them whenever they chose. Brenda clarified as follows, 'Jessie enjoys Troy. It will give us a break from him. [...] There are no problems with husbands with Jessie she is by herself.' Brenda went on to describe the activities she and Jessie did together which would demonstrate the intimacy of the relationship.

I need someone to look after Troy when I go to PE [**Port Elizabeth**] so I take Jessie with me. She is an old farm lady who has never been to town. I bought her a can of coke. "Madam, how do you open this thing?" She had never seen a can of coke before. Then I opened it for her.

Jessie was it nice?

Yes, it made me feel nice here in my chest.

I took her to the McDonalds in PE, she had never been there either.
A white guy didn't like it, but she is my nanny I take her where I want.

It was after a trip out to Port Elizabeth that Brenda asked Jessie to increase her working hours from two days to that of four. The net outcome for Jessie was that her working hours had been doubled for the same wages she had earned for two days. Brenda had no contract of employment with Jessie, and pay and holidays were to be continually arranged on an ad hoc basis. She states:

I don't have a contract with Jessie. I have asked her but she says she doesn't want one. I told her we can get a contract, but I can't pay her the money they say I must pay her. I told her she can work for someone else if she wants to. It is up to her if she wants one. I treat her the same as they treat me at work. She will get a bonus when I get a bonus, when my pay goes up I will pay her more. I pay her for holidays. I will get her a pension. I don't tell her that though, otherwise you tell them and they think they must get it, or they go early on the pension.

The qualities that Brenda admired about Jessie were personal ones. She states, 'She is plain and simple, doesn't talk back, does what you tell her. She is a friend.' The standard of Jessie's work was not discussed in any detail, as Brenda was keen to stress the point that it was not just a case of having your house cleaned but how it was done. The only complaint Brenda had about Jessie was her bad breath. This was so overpowering that Brenda arranged a visit to the dentist for Jessie, and subsequently a rotten tooth was removed. Brenda informed me, that she did not want to hurt Jessie's feelings, so pretended to find a spare toothbrush and tube of toothpaste in her cupboard and gave them to her. 'You use this Jessie, I don't need it. Everywhere else she is really clean, this is terrible but we will sort it out.' Brenda fully expected to employ Jessie long term. The only proviso to this was if minimum wages became statute. Brenda stated that she would 'have no choice' but to cancel the employment

arrangement as she was not in a position to pay increased wages. In addition to paying Jessie Brenda was also paying fees to a 'day-mother' [**child-minder**] for her son. Jessie could tend him, but Brenda thought it was important that he had the opportunity to mix with other children. Brenda had no control over these childcare fees and was committed to pay them because her son's happiness was a priority. Jessie, although needed, was expendable and Brenda was therefore keen to monitor the actions of state in respect of employment legislation.

1-(ii) Servant's profile: - Jessie.

Jessie's home in the townships near Grahamstown had electricity and an outside water tap and toilet facilities. She had a front room, kitchen and a bedroom. She lived by herself. Jessie had a television but did not own a telephone. She described her home as a 'nice house' and that she looked after it. I asked her if she preferred having her own place. She replied no and that if she could she would like to live in the house of her employer. She had lived in with her previous employers but when they died, she had to get a house in the township. She really would like to live with Richard and Brenda, but their house was too small. I asked her if they moved to a bigger house and they offered her a room would she move in with them. The reply was 'Yes, I would like to'. I asked her did she think the whites had better houses than the blacks. She laughed and said, 'Yes'. When asking her did she think this was right she just shrugged her shoulders and said her employers were very kind to her. I asked Jessie if she was hopeful about the future. She could not say, she would just have to wait and see. She would work as long as she could, and she would not think about the time when she could not work. She told me she really liked all housework, and it made her

feel good when she cleaned. Her favourite job was looking after Troy, - Richard and Brenda's young son.

(The following personal details of Jessie's life were unknown to both Brenda and her other employer. The explanation for this, given by Jessie's other employer, was that black people were private people and did not talk about their personal lives. I duly noted that Jessie readily responded to all questions that were asked of her irrespective of how personal.)

Jessie thought her age was about fifty-three but has no recollection of her birth date and has never known a birthday. She also had no idea what age she was when she took her first job as a domestic. All she could remember was the fact that she 'had breasts when she started'. Her first husband deserted Jessie when she was a young woman, leaving her with a son to raise. Her son was now twenty-five years of age and worked on a neighbouring farm. Jessie had no contact with him. Her second husband had been about thirty years older than she was, and she had enjoyed looking after him whilst he was alive. Jessie truly was a woman by herself. She had two brothers, but she did not know where they were. Both her parents were also dead. Jessie did remember that her mother also had been a domestic worker, and whilst her mother worked she looked after the family. I asked her if her life had changed at all since apartheid has gone. She did not think her working life had changed at all, but then again did not expect it to. She made the point that she could not read and write, so how could it change? Jessie also said that she felt her life had got worse since apartheid had gone. I asked how could that be if her working life had not changed at all. She said that all the prices had gone up in the shops now, and she could not buy as much food as she used to.

I asked Jessie how she regarded her two employers. She replied 'They are like my mothers, they are kind to me. They are good women. They look after me.' I asked

Jessie again, about what she would do when she was too old to work. She would not answer directly, and simply said, 'I will work'. Jessie proceeded to tell me that housework was good to do, that she enjoyed caring for nice things and was 'lucky' to have her job. I asked Jessie to think of another job that she would like to have done. She replied, 'I can't read and write'. It was clear to me that she had not thought of any other type of employment. She was keen to attend a literacy class in the township. The difficulty was that it was held during the day whilst Jessie was working. I asked her if she had requested time off work to attend. This was yet another question that she refused to answer directly. Her response again was, 'I have to work'.

Although Jessie believed that her own life had worsened with the passing of apartheid, she was more hopeful for other black women. She said, 'They **[black women]** have more chances than me. They can do things because they can read and write.' Jessie perceived her illiteracy as a major handicap in her life. To have a job, any job was to her a great blessing. I asked her, if it was so important to read and write why had she never learnt to do so. Jessie explained that being raised on a farm that none of the children of black employees had the opportunity to go to school. It was only now, as she was older in life that she felt the need to learn. I asked her if her son could read and write. She replied 'No'. This, she believed was one of the reasons that she had lost contact with him, as neither of them could write. I asked her if she would like to see him again. The response was that it was hard because she had to work and did not have the money to travel to see him.

Brenda's son Troy was extremely important to Jessie, and she informed me that she wished she could spend more time with him. She was teaching him to speak Xhosa,

and when he repeated the words she taught him back to her, it made her laugh.

Jessie was agreeable to the notion of holidays with her employer. This would give her more opportunities to tend Troy. This was also a major reason for Jessie wishing to have accommodation with Brenda. Jessie, although not vocalising her loneliness, clearly felt isolated. All her adult life she has lived in white households and has found living in the township difficult. I asked her if her wages were enough for her to live on. She replied, 'They pay what they can'. Jessie was consequently not prepared to ask for better wages but kept hoping that her employers would move to a bigger property, which would have a room for her to move in to.

1-(iii) Domestic service relationship:

Jessie worked for Brenda and Richard Monday through Thursday and started at 7.00 am in the morning and finished at 5 00 pm. Her monthly salary was R200. As stated earlier, this was initially Jessie's remuneration for two days a week, which Brenda increased to four with no corresponding increase in monthly salary. In addition, Jessie was given another R100 per month for her taxi fare. Brenda explained that Jessie's wages were supplemented by free access to food in the home. However, as Brenda said, 'But she does not eat much. Jessie drinks tea without milk, and eats bread without butter'. Jessie was so reliable and trustworthy, that if the tea caddie was empty she would not take a new packet out of the cupboard, but would just drink water. (Brenda informed me that the sure way to check if a maid was stealing from you was to check the sugar. Her sugar had never been touched). Jessie worked on Fridays for the elderly Afrikaans couple who had recommended Jessie to Brenda. From them, she received R35 per day.

All employers and domestic workers stated that food was readily accessible in the home. However, this specific case raises the ambiguities of these assertions. Although employers may well have sanctioned their employees' freedom to eat what they wanted, do their actions support the words? If this was fact why did Brenda feel it necessary to check the level of her sugar? Why did Jessie only drink water rather than open a new packet of tea? In addition, Brenda knew exactly what food Jessie ate during the day in her absence, which does strongly suggest that she checked. It can be concluded therefore that surveillance of Jessie was an integral component of the relationship. Similarly with all other domestic workers, their employers knew exactly what their employees ate. Zenith's 5-(ii) diet was more varied than most as Katrina her employer 5-(ii) would often leave various types of meat etc in the fridge for her to eat. However, she had explicitly stated on many occasions that Zenith was to 'help herself'. The domestic workers' reservations in taking food without explicit permission do suggest that the barriers in the relationship were still in force. Adding my 'chains of otherness' conception, it could be argued that Jessie, and many of the other servants, were unable to cast off their restrictions because of being the 'other' in the relationship. For example, Jessie was simultaneously the 'other' as she was the servant to the mistress, child to the mother, black against white, and part of self that Brenda was rejecting. All of which restrained her from the simple act of opening a new packet of tea when she wanted to. Her chains were binding but obscured by her perception of kindness by her employer.

Brenda described Jessie as a 'friend' and emphasised in interview her altruistic acts such as proposed holidays and trips out to Port Elizabeth. Yet, of all the employers interviewed Brenda paid the lowest wages to her servant. The house was comparatively small in size to the others in the vicinity and it was debatable whether it

required four days work to maintain it. Jessie's initial two days was sufficient to fulfil the allotted work tasks. Why then was her working week extended to four days if there was not the additional funds available to pay her? The conclusion must be one of opportunism on Brenda's part. This is an example of exploitation through the medium of kindness. It is important to note that the increased hours of work were suggested to Brenda after a 'treat' to McDonalds. Anderson's (2000) arguments in respect of employers' power over their employees being increased through acts of benevolence have empirical validation in this domestic service relationship. Vulnerable women such as Jessie may not be aware of the hidden agendas of some of the women they work for. The position of child in the relationship would also seem to deter some domestic workers from questioning the actions of their adult employers.

The comments in respect of Jessie's marital status were revealing. Brenda states, '[...] there are no problems with husbands with Jessie, she is by herself'. Brenda was pleased that Jessie was a single woman with no dependants – it was convenient to her. As a friend, are we not concerned for the isolation, loneliness, and quality of life of the one we care about? Brenda determined the terms and conditions of this professed friendship. Jessie's single status enhanced Brenda's position and weakened Jessie's in their relationship together. Brenda was well aware of Jessie's desire to live-in, love of Troy and willing compliance to her wishes. Brenda may well have cared for her domestic worker, but what was apparent was the fact that she was in an unassailable position and could manipulate Jessie if she so desired. Brenda did inform me that Jessie did exactly what she was told to do. In Brenda's opinion it was wrong for a maid to answer her madam back, and this was why older women were better than their younger counterparts.

Brenda sought to justify herself as a fair and kind employer by stating that she had given tacit permission to Jessie to seek a new employer if she so desired. This lacks credibility when applied to Jessie's personal circumstances. Jessie's opportunities at fifty-three years of age with no education of finding alternative employment were slim. This aside from the fact that she was working full-time. Jessie could not even find time to attend a literacy class, so the probability of time for interviews etc would seem unlikely. The very qualities that Brenda admired in Jessie would also seem to be an obstacle to block Jessie seeking alternative employment. As a deferential, biddable and unassuming servant, it would be difficult for her to step out on her own. Jessie's life history was illuminating. Having worked for the same employers for many years the employment contract had only been terminated with their death. With both her two new employers, they had sent for her from the townships and it was their decision to employ her. Jessie had a lifetime of dutiful service in the white community. It was her vulnerability that made her exploitable and her acquiescence that facilitated her employers' power in the relationship.

Jessie was sweet-natured and anxious to please. Scott's (1990) comments regarding the direct relationship between vulnerability and deference are applicable. Extreme vulnerability does manifest itself in a matching deference, however whether this in all instances hides a hidden resistance is questionable. Jessie without the presence of her employers in a different location restated how much she loved and cared for them. Particularly, she remembered her previous deceased employers with great fondness, and said she missed them. She stated that she had been very happy with all her employers and would not change her job even if she could. I had no reason to doubt that her words were genuine. The desire to live with her employers does not only

confirm this, but also implicitly suggests that Jessie was an active participant in the 'pseudo-maternalistic' relationship.

This poses the question as to why this is the case. Jessie's experiences would suggest the opposite, that is, a resentment and anger at her treatment. For example, despite working for many years for employers that she openly admitted that she loved, on their death she was sent to the township. These loving employers irrespective of all the years' service that Jessie had put in on their behalf had made no pension provision for her. As elderly employers they must have been aware of their own mortality and had not encouraged Jessie to seek employment with younger people. These employers had not thought to consider Jessie's own future when they no longer needed her. Irrespective of this, Jessie at no time questioned their actions and indeed, it could be suggested that in her relationships with her new white employers she had maintained her faith that they would take care of her. The unanswerable question is why did Jessie have such trust in her employers despite their uncaring actions. Jessie's life history was not shared but perhaps here there may have been some answers. The scanty details I was told might be a clue. Her mother had been a domestic and had to leave her daughter, therefore Jessie like many other black children was 'motherless' for significant parts of her formative years. Similarly, she had to leave her own child and her opportunities of 'mothering' were seriously impeded. Perhaps the outcome for Jessie and many like her is that emotion deprivation has left them susceptible to a kindly manner, which they do not see beyond.

The arguments put forward in the thesis have suggested that power differentials, which are made manifest through the ideologies of difference, have imposed the role

of child onto the domestic worker. In the case of Jessie, in which her voluntary rather than determined positioning in the role is evident, this necessitates the arguments being modified to accommodate this variation. The principles of transactional analysis (TA) (see Berne: 1962, 1966, & 1971) offer some insights as to why some adults actively seek childlike status. Furthermore, they add nuances and clarifications to the concept of 'the other'. My conception of self and you are situated within the relationship between us, and our transactions/communications will reflect these perceptions. TA's focus is on personality structure, which is fundamental to the execution and manifestations of perceptions in the transactional processes in the relationship. In summary, TA is useful in understanding how 'the other' relationships are created and sustained. However, before considering them it is important to understand that this type of theorising is within the bounds of psychology, which, as earlier stated, analyses personality and how this is used and is effected by interrelations (transactions) with others. In its advanced form TA is highly complex and intricate and is used as a method in psychopathology. The remit of the thesis is not a detailed investigation of the psychological aspects of the domestic service relationship. Therefore, I will utilise the fundamental principles of TA rather than its more in-depth theories in this context.

Firstly, we need to understand some of its basic tenets before then considering how they relate to Jessie et al. The ego-states model is a central component to TA and was developed by Eric Berne, an analyst trained in the Freudian tradition. He defines an ego-state as follows, 'a consistent pattern of feeling and experience directly related to a corresponding consistent pattern of behavior [sic]' (Stewart, 1999: 15). Within each of us are three fluid ego-states, which are; Parent-Adult-Child. Each individual

personality moves between the three. The descriptions of the time dimensions of

the ego-states as follows:

In Child, I am replaying behaviors, thoughts and feelings from my own past- my childhood. When I am in my parent ego-state, I am engaging in behaviors, thoughts and feelings which I copied in the past from my parents and parent-figures. Only when I am in my Adult am I responding to situations with all my present resources as a grown-up (Stewart, 1999: 19-20).

If we now consider Jessie, both her Parent and Child ego-states will have been significantly influenced by pervasive paternalistic social practices. Her mother as a domestic servant probably would have been deferential, subservient and 'childlike' in her transactions with the white community. Therefore, Jessie moving into her Parent ego-state could replicate and feel comfortable with these types of behaviours. The shift to Child becomes relatively easy as this ego-state is reinforced by behaviours in her Parent ego-state.

If we now add the employer and their personality into the relationship, the allure of the role of child for Jessie becomes even more apparent. The evidence would suggest that Brenda's personality was predominantly in its Parent ego-state when in transactions with Jessie. Therefore, the outcome will be as follows, ' [...] if I address you from my Parent ego-state, chances are you will respond to me from your child' (Stewart, 1999: 43). Jessie's intuitive response to parental authority would be that of Child, a child which is accepting rather than challenging. Dusay adds a further dimension when he suggests a constancy hypothesis. He asserts that as an ego-state intensifies one or both of the other ego-states must diminish to compensate (Scott, 1999: 29). The child lives with its parents, is cared for by its parents, and desires their nurturing influence. I would suggest that perhaps in Jessie there was an intensification of her Child ego-state, which motivated her to come more in the sphere

of her 'surrogate' mother. This is voluntary, but the parental-employer would appear to be significant in Jessie's Child ego-state being amplified within her personality. The next chapter identifies domestic servants who 'play' the role of the child rather than 'live it'. The ego-state in predominance will not be the same as Jessie's and will be considered in these case studies.

Case Study2: English-speaking employer and Xhosa maid.

(2)-(i) Employer's profile: - Natalie.

The home was detached and like many of the homes I visited was single storey. The rooms were large and comfortably furnished. It consisted of three bedrooms, kitchen, lounge, dining room, study/sitting room, garage and outhouses. The outhouses had been traditionally occupied by the servants but now like many others in the area were empty. Natalie informed me that with the encroachment of the townships towards the town there was no need for servants to have accommodation with their employers. Natalie expressed real fear of the proximity of the townships to her own property as she felt crime would now be on the increase. She had become involved in a neighbourhood watch, and the gates and doors of her house were locked at all times. A black family has moved in across the road from her property. Natalie clearly stated that she had no objection to this development but was concerned by the men that came to the house. She understood that the black family paid a man to watch their property whilst they went out to work. This meant that the man would sit on the street corner all day directly opposite Natalie's home. Unfortunately, Natalie said, numerous of his friends would congregate with him, and spend hours just sitting about and watching. The fact that black men were sitting outside her home, for whatever reason, made her feel uneasy. She did not feel that safe to leave her home, not that she feared attack but

that these men might take the opportunity to burgle her home in her absence. As they were always there, these men would know when the property was unattended.

Natalie was a retired teacher and had moved to Grahamstown in the 1950s and shared a home with a friend. Neither women had ever married and Natalie now lived alone as her friend had died the previous year. Natalie's age was never disclosed, but she appeared to be in her late sixties to early seventies. Until her death, Natalie's friend had taken sole responsibility for the management of the servants. Therefore, becoming 'the Madam' was a relatively new experience for her. Natalie believed that in her lifetime there had been significant changes in the way servants are treated. When she first came to the area, she lived in a hostel where approximately thirty servants were employed. She remembered that 'They were paid by the government, nothing to do with us, very low wages, terrible wages, no pension, no sick fund, nothing'. The servants' wages were supplemented by rations, which consisted of samp, beans, jam, bread and meat. She thought ration systems were no longer in force and the majority of servants could have free access to food in the home. This certainly was the case with her own maid, Rebecca.

However, Natalie took an avid interest in Rebecca's eating habits. Again, this is of significance as it does indicate a certain degree of constant surveillance. She states:

What she drinks in a week would take me three weeks to drink. She loves her tea. She loves her sugar, which I am always telling her about. Her mother has got very bad diabetes. I am always fighting with her because she doesn't eat her food every day. There is rice for her every day, and she can make her own rice. She doesn't like samp [...] I say to her, look if you don't put petrol in the engine you can't expect it to go. And she said to me I didn't feel like it. Then she will eat up three-quarters of a loaf of bread, that makes me mad.

Natalie informed me that she loved Rebecca dearly and was concerned for her welfare. She had taught her to cook, and Natalie often made meals herself for Rebecca to take home to her family. The quality that she admired in Rebecca was her 'warmth and care' to herself. It could be lonely when living alone and having Rebecca's companionship was important to Natalie. However, this was not the main reason for employing a servant. The reason she told me was that she felt responsible for Rebecca and her family. Rebecca's mother had been her domestic worker for many years and Natalie now felt an obligation to her daughter. She was in no doubt that she could 'manage' without her. The problem was that any alternative employment for Rebecca was not feasible. Natalie had been making enquires in case 'anything happened to her', but had not been able to find anyone that would be prepared to employ Rebecca in the event of her own demise. However, Natalie did express the view that if a minimum wage became enforced she would have no alternative but to end Rebecca's employment. As a pensioner, her own income was limited and there was no more money available for additional wages.

Natalie perceived herself as like Rebecca's mother and these feelings were probably exacerbated by the fact that Natalie had known Rebecca when she was a young girl. Natalie was now also sponsoring Rebecca's youngest child. This entailed paying school fees and providing extra money for such things as books and pencils. Natalie was prepared to continue this support as long as she was able and hoped to see Rebecca's daughter attend university. Natalie illustrated her involvement in the lives of her servants when she states:

Our servants have always been members of our family. Now always if they're ill, you get the doctor for them, you give them medicines. If they have to have teeth you provide their teeth. If there's trouble in the house you help them. [...] They are like your children, and you treated them always decently. You never treated them as equals, some did, a few people did, but very few.

The level of intimacy was set within parameters. For example, Natalie cited the following experience:

Rebecca has lots of problems with all her family, her children and so on. I have come to the point where I have had to say to her, stop, you leave those problems outside there. She can stand there the whole time, "Sigh, sigh". "You start me feeling like that – now stop it."

To demonstrate her concern and care she made the following remarks:

She goes home everyday at 4 0'clock, some days earlier, and of course, if she is not well, that week we don't worry about the house. I send her home after a few hours. Every time I tell her it is because she doesn't eat properly. She eats about three bites of fruit and that type of thing, and she will sit on the wet grass outside. She doesn't believe it is wet. You know you can't teach them, they will never learn. They are an annoying people from that point of view. But they are a very happy people.

The significant remark, which is worth considering, is the one that indicates Rebecca goes home 'after a few hours'. The point to consider is why was Rebecca not sent home immediately. Presumably during those few hours, Rebecca continued to work. The altruism therefore did not impede on some degree of labour being extracted.

Natalie personally felt that she had not altered her attitude or behaviour towards her servants with the passing of apartheid. There had been many whites that had abused their positions and taken advantage of their employees but she had not been party to this. In her opinion, it was still possible to exploit black servants because of the desperate nature of their circumstances. As these women have little prospects of alternative work employers can and do dictate the terms of the employment contract.

When the state intervenes with 'more and more' legislation employers will respond by ceasing to employ them. Natalie felt education was important to give more opportunities to the black community. This was why she was helping Rachel's daughter, in the hope that the child would have a better future than her grandmother and mother. However, Natalie had not considered at what stage she would cease the funding. Whilst the child was at school this was relatively cheap, on the other hand university education was far more expensive and would have to be considered.

2-(ii) Servant's profile: - Rebecca.

Rebecca and her family lived in a mud hut, which the family had constructed and erected themselves. Planning permission was not sought and her home was typical of many in the townships. Mud houses were situated next to brick built houses, which had all the facilities laid on. Those people with the 'properly' constructed residences had expressed resentment towards those in the mud dwellings. In their opinion it devalued their homes, and took away any opportunity of selling their property in the future. Rebecca herself told me, she keenly felt the displeasure of her neighbours, who she said often remarked to her that she should never have had so many children, and this was the reason she was living the way she was. It was clear that Rebecca felt isolated and alone because of her living arrangements. 'They say I am living like I do because of all the children I have. They laugh at me, but I don't care. God is there for me. I ask Him everyday to get me out of here. You walk with God I can tell, you pray for me too, ask him to help me.'

Rebecca's English was very good, as she has always worked for English-speaking South Africans. Rebecca at no time expressed bitterness, believing that her circumstances were inevitable because of her husband's injury and inability to work through the resulting disability. She attended Church in the location every Sunday

and was trusting in God to get the family a 'proper house'. Rebecca told me that where she lived, and its inadequacy was something that she worried about on a daily basis. She was embarrassed that she lived in such a house. Another worry that was constantly with her was what would she do when she was too old to work. Rebecca was dependent on her white employer for the necessities of life. Like the majority of the other women I interviewed she had no private pension provision.

Rebecca was fifty-seven years of age, and was the mother of nine children – six boys and three girls. Her youngest child was twelve, her eldest thirty-five. All the girls were still at school, and Ruth was keen that they get an education. Only one son had a job and he worked for a security firm as a guard. Ruth's husband had an accident at work in 1980 and has been unfit for work ever since. Occasionally when he felt fit enough, he would do some small painting jobs. I asked about compensation from the company, and I was told that they tried but nothing came of it. 'He gets no money at all apart from these odd jobs now and then'. Rebecca's mother was now also dependent on her. She was bed-ridden so Ruth fitted in her job around caring for her mother and children. When Ruth's mother became totally incapable, she moved into the mud hut with the rest of the family. This is another major reason that Ruth wanted a new home. She left both her mother and husband in a house that did not even have the rudiments of basic living. As Ruth stated, when it rained the house itself began to deteriorate. The access to the house became a quagmire, and then Ruth in addition to caring for the invalids in the house had to clear up the mess brought about by the adverse weather conditions.

Rebecca started a formal job when she was approximately eighteen years of age, previously having looked after her siblings whilst her mother went to work as a

domestic. Rebecca's mother had been Natalie's domestic for many years, and when she became ill four years ago, Rebecca took over the job. She was grateful to get the job, as she was finding it difficult to get full time work. Rebecca felt that times were even more difficult now, as many whites were shedding their domestics because of all the new laws that were coming in. Rebecca only had a vague notion of what these labour laws entailed. For example, she knew that the minimum wage was a possibility for domestics but had never heard of a contract of employment. Her greatest fear was of losing her job. At the age of fifty-seven, she quite rightly believed, that it would be extremely difficult for her to find new employment. I asked her what she thought of a minimum wage for domestics, and she replied that she would like it, but felt that many employers would not pay it. She felt it was best if she carried on as she was now. Ruth walked to and from work, and this took her an hour each way.

It took Rebecca a long time to answer the question 'If you were not now a domestic servant, what other job would you have liked to have done?' (**This I found was a problem question for many**). Rebecca informed me that this was something she never thought about, particularly now she was old. Eventually after considerable thought, Ruth remembered as a little girl wanting to be a nurse. Having had the experience of caring for her mother, Ruth believed it was something she could have done well. As it is, she now wished that she had more time to nurse her mother, but this was not possible with her work commitments. Ruth believed that it was only through education that you can choose a career. This is why she was so pleased all her girls were still at school. Despite the fact that her children were having more educational opportunities than she did, Ruth was not hopeful for the future. As only one son was working what the family would do when she was too old to work she

tried not to think about. Perhaps, she said, she would have been more hopeful if she did not have so many children to support.

2-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

Rebecca's wages were R470 per month, and meals, presents, and assistance with bills supplemented these. Cast-off clothing for the family was also provided on a regular basis. The sponsorship of Brenda, the youngest child at school, consists of R15 fees per term, and R10 per term for sundry expenses such as pencils etc. Hours of employment were Monday to Friday 9.00am-4.00pm with two weeks paid holiday a year. Natalie was not happy with allowing Rebecca public holidays off but had decided to comply with labour legislation and grant them. This was an improvement on the terms of employment Rebecca's mother had had imposed on her. Natalie and her friend had employed her for seven days a week with Saturday or Sunday afternoon off, whichever they preferred, no entitlement to holidays or public bank holidays was ever granted. It is also important to remember that this domestic worker had to retire through ill health, had no private pension provision, and was now being totally supported by Rebecca. These facts do challenge Natalie's assertion that apartheid had not influenced her treatment of her servants. There was a marked difference in the conditions of employment for Rebecca's mother to those for Rebecca.

This domestic relationship, like the other two cited in this chapter, was also 'pseudo-maternalistic'. Natalie's kindness and concern was not in question, but the outcome was the perpetuation of the role of child in the relationship for Rebecca. The transaction analysis considerations are pertinent for this domestic service relationship as they were for 1-(iii). It is unfair to suggest that Natalie imposed completely the

status of child on Rebecca. She like Jessie colluded in her positioning in the relationship. For example, Rebecca thought it was the whites' responsibility and duty to care for the needs of the black community. Indeed, Rebecca suggested that one of the reasons blacks were stealing from white people in ever increasing numbers, was because they believed the whites 'owed them' and were failing 'to look after them' as they should. The intimacy of Rebecca's life with that of white employers was also significant in that this strengthened her expectations of being nurtured by them. Rebecca was not prepared to contemplate the possibility of being 'cut adrift' from the white community.

Natalie's sentiments in offering Rebecca employment are commendable as she rightly suggested that it would be extremely difficult for Rebecca to find alternative employment. However, Natalie was well aware of Rebecca's domestic commitments, that is a bed-ridden mother, disabled husband, and large family. Accepting the fact that Natalie could not pay any more wages to Rebecca, could she not reduce her hours? For example, two to three days work for the remuneration she gives for five. Natalie was at pains to point out that she did not need a servant, so why did Rebecca come in for five full days? Natalie's justification for full-time employment was that meals could be provided for Rebecca on a daily basis. I hear the words, but cannot accept the rationale of this professed maternal concern. It is significantly flawed. Rebecca's responsibility for supporting eleven people including herself, (husband mother, eight children excluding the ninth who had a job), the food she ate was insignificant in terms of the food that she had to provide for them. This is speculative, but I wonder what Rebecca would rather have had rice, bread, and tea, or extra days to care for her mother and children? Natalie's own recognition of Rebecca's constant

worries about providing for her family would suggest that Rebecca would prefer the latter alternative.

Natalie was convinced that an introduction of the minimum wage in this sector of employment would result in many whites dismissing their servants. If she was correct in this assessment, this could be seen as evidence to support the claim that many employers did not need the services of domestics, and had benevolent motives in employing them. To clarify the point, offering them employment in order to alleviate their poverty when there were no other employment opportunities available could be viewed as altruism. If we accept that employers could ill-afford to increase wages why, to repeat the earlier point, do they not simply reduce hours for the same wages? Immediately the pro-rata ratio between hours worked and wages are increased without employers having to increase their payments. If the outcome of the introduction of the minimum wage is termination of employment rather than a reduction of hours, this seriously questions the altruistic utterances of employers such as Natalie. Having stated that employment was offered because of welfare motivation, to sever the employment relationship when a reduction of hours would ensure compliance with legislation, negates the sentiments. Irrespective of Natalie's close relationship with Rebecca, by demanding five days work from her suggests some degree of exploitation. This would also suggest that her own vulnerability as a woman by herself was not fully acknowledged. It is true that Rebecca was dependent and needed her, but she too was extremely dependent and reliant on Rebecca.

Despite the fact that Rebecca was beset with worries as to how to provide for her family, at no time did she express a desire for increased wages. Like Jessie 1-(ii), she felt that her employer was an extremely kind woman who paid her what she could. It

was the 'system' that was to blame for her circumstances. When exploring what she meant by this, Rebecca was uncertain. Mandela had been a 'good' man and Mbeki would 'do his best'. The past was responsible for her present difficulties. Rebecca was anxious that her children all received a 'good' education and was pleased that Natalie was supporting her youngest daughter. Rebecca stated that she enjoyed domestic work but the pay was inadequate. It was for this reason alone that she did not want her children to become a domestic like her. She herself had only the minimum in education and was only able to read and write her name. She was proud of the fact that her children could read and write for her. With no education Rebecca felt that 'God had blessed her' in giving her this job. She was extremely apprehensive about the future and hoped she would 'keep strong' enough to work. I asked her about retirement and she replied that she would work until she died. She had tried to discuss her concerns about the future with Natalie, but 'she won't listen'.

Rebecca was relaxed in her employer's presence, but like Jessie was quite deferential. In interviewing her, it was clear that she loved Natalie and had implicit faith and trust that she would see to her needs. There was no evidence of disdain for her employer. For example, like Jessie, even away from her employer's presence she spoke of her as 'Madam'. She too did not answer back but complied with all directions from Natalie immediately. Rebecca stated that for her the best part of housework was 'cleaning the nice things'. She was referring here to Natalie's many small and delicate ornaments which were displayed throughout the house. She found it sad that she did not have any of her own. Again, she was convinced that the reason she had so little was not Natalie's fault. She told me that she had to work hard because Natalie watched her all the time. I asked her if she found this difficult, and she answered that it was not a problem. She went on to explain that Natalie loved her and had taught her many

things. She also explained that when she was a young child her mother had not been there and so it was 'nice' now to have someone to 'show' her 'how to do things'. This is a crucial point that probably was true for many of the domestic workers. As most of their mothers had been domestic workers, their employers too had deprived them of the 'mothering' experience, which would suggest that they would accept unconditionally any care and attention. What Rebecca did not question was why her mother had not been there when she was growing up. The irony of the fact that her mother had been working for Natalie and her friend was completely lost on her. In addition, Rebecca did not comment on her own absence from her children. Her priority was to feed and clothe the family.

It was difficult at times to remember that Rebecca was fifty-seven years of age, as she clearly saw herself as a 'child' in the relationship to her employer. There was an inherent belief that 'whites look after us'. We often make the assumption that independence, freedom, and self-determination is a universal desire for all humanity. Indeed, a popular election promise of the African National Congress (ANC) was the empowerment of the black people. Perhaps we need to be a little more discerning. There can be distance between entitlement to these particular human rights and the desire for them. As transactional analysis has indicated, dependency can be an opiate in that the dependent shifts the responsibility for his/her material needs exclusively to the employer. Having made the child, the child then expects to be cared for. A number of employers did make the point that they felt this responsibility. For example, one employer I spoke to was emigrating to the US at the end of 1999, her one worry was her domestic. She was not going to tell her she was leaving the country until she had found a new employer for her.

This employer did make the point that white South Africans could not make the black population dependent on them through punitive legislation and actions and then say you now have your independence. It was her belief that many of the older black generation were incapable of self-sufficiency and were extremely apprehensive of moving away from white support. Age, illiteracy and massive unemployment within the black community in Grahamstown would appear to be the major factors that cleave these black women to whites, not their incapability. For example, from Census 96 figures for the Eastern Cape, 20.9% of the population in the region was illiterate, 48.5% were unemployed and 31.5% earned less than R500 per month. Considering the population of South Africa as a whole the black community accounted for 57% of all unskilled occupations. The informal sector figures were incorporated within this unskilled category. The domestic workers I interviewed were unaware of this wider picture and their assessments were based on their personal experiences and observations of living in the townships. There definitely was a feeling of panic in some of the older domestics I spoke to, including Rebecca. A common view was that working for a white was the only way to secure the basic rudiments of living. Not only this, but the whites owed it to the black people to take care of them. It has to be remembered that many of these older women in the apartheid era had knocked at doors asking for work. Inherent in these actions was the irrefutable recognition that working for the whites were the means to survival. This was a practice engendered by the apartheid system – it still lingered within the expectations of domestic workers such as Rebecca.

Case study 3: Rural employer and Xhosa maid.**3-(i) Employer's profile: - Gail.**

The farm was built in 1822 and was a three-bedroom accommodation. In 1956, another three-bedroom accommodation was built together with a cottage. The farm was a dairy farm and supplied Grahamstown with a significant part of its milk supply and was also 'expanding' into a franchise with supermarkets in Port Elizabeth selling yoghurts, cream etc. The farmhouse was spacious and its huge kitchen was utilised in the yoghurt making operations. Gail and her husband, Roy, lived in this main accommodation, Roy's widowed mother lived in the adjoining home. The cottage was used as a holiday let. Its busiest time was during Grahamstown's Arts Festival when there was a significant influx of visitors to the area. Gail's domestic worker, Cloe, earned extra money for herself when the cottage was occupied by cleaning for the visitors. Gail tried not to be involved in this, leaving Cloe to 'work out' for herself the payment with the clients.

The farm's operations have gradually through the years been eroded and from seventeen employees this has now been reduced to ten full-time and a part-time one. Gail fully expected this downward trend to continue, as with the 'new' labour legislation and its 'complications' her husband had decided it would be better not to hire any one new. He found it difficult, as with three daughters and no son there was no one to carry on the business. In addition to Cloe, who worked as a domestic in the farmhouse, the farm employed another maid for Roy's mother, three 'bottling-maids', two 'milking-maids', two male farm workers and a part-time white delivery man. All

these employees have been with Roy and Gail for 'a long-time' and Gail felt a great sense of obligation for their welfare. She states:

We're almost a charity organisation. We are not making any money. All we do to balance the books is sell cattle each year. I know for a fact that these people would never find work. The unemployment in Grahamstown is unbelievable, and it worries me to death. I feel such a responsibility. [...] Most days you try to be positive and you can't really transmit it to them **[employees]**. They just see you with a lot of land and a lot of cattle- that you haven't got a problem.

Gail was a non-South African, having met and married her husband in England whilst he was studying abroad. She was fifty-two years of age and all her daughters had now left home. She was close to her maid, Cloe, but rejected familial ideology emphatically. She asserts, 'Everything about apartheid was horrific, paternalism was definitely wrong [...].' I explained to her that although she did not accept it, Cloe regarded her as a 'mother'. She replied, 'It is inevitable that she does. [...] The biggest thing I would lay at apartheid's door is the lack of education for these people.' In Gail's opinion, paternalism had been bred through black illiteracy and whites being quick to take advantage of this. The problem was that even if a person objected to paternalistic practices, they were so pervasive within the South African society that relationships inevitably became paternalistic. However, Gail did not absolve the white community of culpability for these social practices. Opportunism was an insufficient explanation to give a full account for paternalism. Gail remembered, as an outsider, her awareness of racial prejudices particularly in the older white generation. For example, Gail spoke of a recent incident with her own mother-in-law. 'My mother-in-law lives in the past. She said, "You know, a black person had the cheek to leave a message on the voice mail." I was speechless. I don't think that attitude will change, it will just have to die out.' Therefore, Gail saw no short term

solution to the 'problems' of South Africa, it would take time for those with racial prejudices to die and be replaced by the younger generation, and it would also take time for black people to be educated.

Having rejected familial ideology Gail did acknowledge that she had a great love for Cloe. 'She is not my sister, but I love her as much as if she was'. The quality she admired most in her was her conscientiousness. The only thing she objected to in Cloe was the fact that she worked too hard. 'She was 'obsessive' about housework.

I came in one day to see her scrubbing the floor again. I asked her when she last had done that. The reply was two days ago. I asked her, "Why are you doing it again? I was irritated with her. She is not getting any younger. She is obsessed with work. I don't tell her what jobs to do, she just does them. That's the problem.

Cloe was a very quiet woman, apart from on pay-day when she always got drunk. From not saying anything, she became extremely loquacious and could not be shut up. Both Gail and Roy found this highly amusing, but had no idea how much she spent of her wages for her pay-day drinking binge. Gail admitted that there were many aspects of Cloe's life that were closed to her and although not having any definite information believed that Cloe had been badly abused in her younger life by her male partner. Gail speculated whether this was a reason that Cloe chose to live on the farm, as all her other workers preferred to live in the township which was close by

The proximity of the farm to the spreading township was a major concern to both Roy and Gail. Every month at least one of their cattle from the dairy herd was stolen, and it was impossible to keep a constant vigil to protect them. Crime was part of life in South Africa. Gail has personally experienced this. Three armed raiders murdered her father-in-law in the late 1980s, in the adjacent house. Roy was seriously wounded in the farmhouse as the raiders then entered their home. Gail was threatened and told

to find money. The bullet holes from the attack were still visible in the framework of the kitchen door in the farmhouse. Apart from overcoming this tragedy, Gail stated that another outcome has been the fact that the farm had become unsellable. No one will purchase a farm where murder has been committed. Gail believed that after the murder, 'it could not get any worse'. However, one of her maid's twelve year old daughter was raped in the townships. Gail decided that she should accompany the injured child and her mother to the hospital in Port Elizabeth as her maid was not communicative under normal circumstances and was completely 'dazed' when informed of the attack on her daughter. Gail did not describe in detail the experience, but simply stated that she has had recurring nightmares ever since and will never forget the little girl's face. Gail felt that often with her servants it was the circumstances that impelled her to act, as she felt that they themselves could not act independently without her support and help.

3-(ii) Servant's profile: - Cloe.

By choice, Cloe lived on the farm with her two children. It was a 12'x12' dwelling with no electricity and had an outside water tap. It consisted of three barely furnished rooms. At night, she and the children would roll out sleeping mats, which would then be packed away in the morning. The house had no kitchen and Cloe stated that she cooked her meals for her family outside. When I asked how she managed to this she replied, 'It's easy I wouldn't want a kitchen in my house, it would make everything smell. Best outside and smoke goes away.' Cloe was extremely proud of the fact that she could cook and informed me that she knew how to use the kitchen stove in the farmhouse and could bake as well as cook on it. There were six adjacent servants' quarters but all were standing empty. Cloe said, 'Everyone else lives in location –it's

not safe'. It was her friend's young daughter who had been the rape victim and Cloe was consequently unhappy about living there. Living-in also meant she was on hand if she was needed. It was important to Cloe that she was valued by her employer as for her, security came from living on the farm. The abuse she had personally suffered by her previous partner was not elaborated on but must have been a factor in her deep affiliation to staying where she was.

Roy and Gail felt it was not economically viable to put electricity in the accommodation, as it would be expensive to do so. If Cloe left or chose to live in the township, no one else would want to live there. The township was so close that it was convenient for all the workers to commute. The murder on the farm had also had an impact, as all of the other employees were nervous about staying on the farm at night. Neither Roy nor Gail would have objected if Cloe had decided to move into a township property. It was entirely her choice that she still had accommodation on the farm. Cloe considered herself extremely fortunate to live on the farm as she felt Gail 'allowed' it because she wanted to live here. I asked Cloe what would she do if she lost her job or came to retire. She was adamant that she would always work and would always remain on the farm. This was a recurring sentiment with the domestic workers I interviewed. This I believe has two main causes. Firstly, with no pension provision their capacity to work was their only means of survival. Secondly, their lives were so intimately interwoven with that of their employers that severing that involvement was for many emotionally untenable. Referring back to the earlier point, as many domestic workers had been 'motherless' and also had restrictions on their 'mothering' opportunities the emotional commitment to their employers was significant. Cloe had no comprehension of the fact that her job may be precarious. She together with the other employees felt the farm would always operate, and that

their jobs would always be there. I asked Cloe if she thought the farm was doing well. She replied 'yes' and thought Gail was very rich.

Cloe had no idea how old she was and I estimated that she was in her early forties. She had been married once but he had been a 'bad man'. I probed a little further but Cloe did not wish to talk about it. All she said was 'it was a bad time'. She now had a boyfriend who came to visit from time to time. He did not live with her and did not contribute any money to her or the children. When I asked her if she would like to make the relationship more permanent she just smiled and shrugged her shoulders. Her son was eighteen years old and her daughter was fifteen. Her son had left school but did not have a job. Cloe worried about him. He was still living with her but she did not know how long it would be before he left. He was not happy that they did not have electricity in the home and wanted to watch television with his friends. Her daughter was doing well at school and Cloe hoped she would 'stay on' and get a good job.

I asked Cloe about her extended family. She only had contact with one of her sisters and Cloe was not proud of the relationship because of her sister's behaviour. Cloe related the following incident to explain why she was so ashamed of her sister. When Cloe had been considerably younger, she had decided to go and live with her other sister in Port Elizabeth. 'I ran off without telling Gail'. Cloe did not relate any details about her life in Port Elizabeth but stated she had come back after a few months because she was not happy. She had asked Gail to take her back. Cloe was worried because in her absence Gail had offered her job to her sister. Gail had not known that Cloe's sister had a serious drinking problem. (Gail herself told me that during the Christmas period when all Roy and Gail's family had arrived they had found Cloe's

sister 'banging on the piano' before passing out across the keys). Cloe said, 'My sister she drunk all the time. I work hard so Gail knows I am not like her.' Cloe's sister still drank a great deal and Cloe kept away from her as much as possible.

Cloe stated that she enjoyed all aspects of housework and wanted to 'do her best' for Gail. Gail was like her mother and would take care of her and her family. Her son, a few years ago, when returning from school, after disembarking from the school bus had decided to throw stones at it. One of the stones had damaged the windscreen and her son had been arrested and taken to the police station. Cloe was still upset when she remembered it. The situation became even worse because the Bus Company had demanded compensation for the damage. Cloe said, 'But I didn't have any money. They kept talking about insurance, but I didn't have insurance.' I asked Cloe how things had been 'sorted out'. She replied she didn't know. Gail had come with her to the police station and dealt with the Bus Company. I asked Cloe if Gail had paid for the windscreen and Cleo stated that she did not know. As soon as Gail had become involved, Cloe had ceased to worry about it as she knew Gail would look after the problem. Cloe was extremely grateful to Gail and knew she would always help her if she needed her to.

3-(iii) Domestic service relationship:

Cloe was paid R410 per month and was given two weeks paid leave a year. Irrespective of the fact that Gail was familiar with labour legislation, Cloe did not have a contract of employment and had no pension provision. Her hours of employment were Monday-Friday from 8.00am-4.00pm. There was no charge for her accommodation on the farm and she had free access to food whilst she was at work.

In addition, she was also given rations. These included samp, beans and staple foods such as sugar and milk. Cloe stated that her usual wages for cleaning for the visitors in the cottage was approximately R35 per day. The best was when ‘the people came from far away’ as they sometimes gave her extra money when they left. Cloe had been a domestic employer all her adult life and had worked for many employers. Gail was described as a ‘good woman’. ‘She is like my mother and has always taken care of me.’ Cloe thought her wages were fair and that she was paid what her employers could afford. She was well aware of the high unemployment in Grahamstown and felt extremely fortunate to have a job.

This domestic service relationship was indicative of the fact that employers could easily disregard Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 1994. Ignorance for non-compliance was not an excuse for Roy and Gail as they both had clearly indicated that they had examined and were familiar with the ramifications of labour legislation. Indeed a deciding factor in not employing ‘new’ staff had been because of labour law. Implicitly by their actions was the suggestion that labour legislation would only be heeded for new contracts of employment and not for existing ones. This was a misconception, as of 1994, both farm and domestic workers came under the ambit of the legislation and Gail should have implemented the conditions of the act for all her employees. (Appendix 3 has the specific details of the act as applied to domestic workers). Cloe was entitled to an additional week’s holiday, plus all bank holidays – these were not given. Unlike other employers Gail gave no indication that she would terminate employment if minimum wages became statute. The fact that the terms and conditions of employment for the eleven employees on the farm did not meet the legal standard would seem to support Grossman’s (1997) assertion of the ineffectiveness of labour legislation for this sector.

Gail did indicate that she felt the ‘informal’ conditions of employment would slowly improve. For example, when referring to her mother-in-law’s attitude towards black people Gail did not accept her view. Other employers also expressed this point of racism being predominant in the ‘older’ generation. For example, Claire, the employer of the educated domestic worker made the following observation in respect of her own mother,

It’s an age thing. Young people treat black people far better than their predecessors did. For instance, my mother is over eighty [...] She has a perception of herself as ‘Lady of the Manor’. **[Claire’s mother had been a kindergarten teacher]**. [...] When I grew up the servants’ lavatory was separate to ours. She gets upset now when Jane **[maid]** uses my toilet.

Both Gail and Claire were vocal in their disagreement with their respective family members in their treatment and attitude to black domestic workers. These sentiments are not conclusive evidence to set against Cock’s findings but do indicate that there may be some improvements happening in the treatment of domestic workers. All the domestic workers I interviewed used the toilet facilities of the home and all the kitchen utensils were readily available for their personal use.

Gail perceived paternalism as the outcome of racial practices and for this reason strongly rejected it. However Cloe, like both the other domestic workers interviewed appeared ‘childlike’ in that she was deferential, respectful and totally dependent on her employer. It was clear that if she so wished Gail could have exploited this relationship further. Cloe informed me that the worst time of her life had been when she had lived in Port Elizabeth and this was something that she would never do again. I asked her what would she do if ‘Madam’ could not pay her any more. Cloe stated that she would stay, as she would rather live here than in the townships. I asked her if she would not like a house with electricity and a television. She said, ‘No, I want to

live here.’ These sentiments were very reminiscent of Jessie’s 1-(ii) and again would seem to suggest that Cloe was an active participant in the ‘pseudo-maternalistic’ relationship. Furthermore, I did accept Gail’s assertion that she from choice would rather not have a familial relationship with her employees because of the ensuing responsibility that went with it. Therefore, it could be concluded that in this case Cloe was to some extent the instigator of the terms of the relationship. By her behaviour, she had been able to extract from her employer the familial bonding that she desired. However, the wider societal factors have to be acknowledged as also being significant in engendering these types of social practices.

Cloe, as was Jessie 1-(ii) and Rebecca 3-(ii), had few other marketable skills. She could just manage to read and write her name. Her lack of education had made her ill equipped for self-sufficiency in the wider society and she felt she was now too old to learn or change her occupation. The outcome for her, and many like her, is that they have to survive by dependency on the white community. Cloe’s own experience of living in Port Elizabeth where she had such a ‘very bad time’ would seem to have reinforced for her the necessity of ‘being taken care of’ by her white employer. My ‘chains of otherness’ conception has argued that the wider societal forces are entrapping, and this example supports the argument. Cloe was the child in the domestic service relationship because of her recognition that the society that she was part of has been instrumental in making a significant number of its black community dependent on white support. It is significant that Cloe, like Rebecca 2-(ii), was determined that her own children should have an education. Cloe’s mother and sisters had all been domestic servants, but Cloe ‘wanted something better’ for her daughter.

Another factor that is important is Cloe's own personal circumstances. She was a single woman with the sole responsibility of raising her two children. Her single status would also engender dependency on her white employer. For example, she asked Gail to become involved with the police authorities when her son had vandalised the school bus. Gail had responded to this request for help. In a sense, it could be argued that the intimacy of the domestic service relationship in some circumstances would result in the white employer becoming a 'substitute' family member, taking the place of the 'natural' extended family. Familial ideology may be the outcome of power differentials between the women in the relationship, but it is also the response to isolation and loneliness of some domestic workers. Ironically, the personal circumstances of women such as Cloe would enhance the power of the employer in the relationship. For example, if Gail had so desired she could have reduced Cloe's wages, as had Brenda 1-(i) to Jessie 1-(ii), and met no resistance to the action. Oakley (1974) has argued that women are 'doubly-burdened' in that in addition to their careers they still have to maintain the home. Domestic workers are 'doubly-burdened' in the domestic service relationship in that many are relatively uneducated but at the same time are single women with complete responsibility for child rearing. For them their employers may seem a way of alleviating their sole responsibility and therefore is not just the parent figure but also one of partner. Even domestics who were married usually were the main financial providers for the family, so they too might find a shifting of responsibility to employers an alluring prospect.

Concluding remarks:

The domestic service relationships between all the women, irrespective of the contradictions within them, were close. This in itself does not stand against Cock's

1979 findings. Her results were mixed. Although a quarter of her sample disliked their employers, only fourteen percent stated they 'did not get along well with their employers' (Cock, 1989/1979: 68). Wages were low in her study, so too in these particular cases. The major difference was the hours worked. The majority of the domestic workers interviewed in 1979 had protracted hours of work. All of my interviewees had lower set hours, which ensured their working days were not extended. However, it is important to acknowledge that Jessie 1-(ii) was desirous of residing with her employer. From this it can be deduced that Jessie was amenable to being 'permanently available' to Brenda 1-(i). Overall Cock (1989/1979: 81) concluded that the domestic service relationship of the period was 'intensely paternalistic'. In these three case studies and in the majority of the others, I also found pervasive familial ideology. For example, Jessie's 1-(ii) dental hygiene, Rebecca's 2-(ii) eating habits and Cloe's 3-(ii) reliance on her employer's intervention with the police are manifestations of 'pseudo-maternalistic' relationships.

Cock (1989/1979: 81) argues that the outcome of paternalistic practices is that workers are consigned to dependent and powerless positions and that in turn this generates a sense of power and superiority in employers. My theoretical arguments have implicitly concurred with this assessment. However, in cases where there are close personal relationships between employers and employees it is too simplistic to argue that the child role is imposed on domestic workers because of power differentials between the women. Jessie, Rebecca and Cloe actively participated in their dependency. All of them expected their white employers to offer succour and support. Jessie, as a single woman, was keen to become more involved with her employer's family, that is, become more reliant and available to them. The wider societal forces in domestic servants' lives will increase the vulnerability of domestic

workers and therefore assuming a childlike role in the domestic service relationship may be appealing as it offers some degree of security and alleviation from these outside pressures. The kindness and power dynamic (as discussed by Anderson 2000) could be enhanced by domestic workers own desire to be nurtured in the domestic service relationship.

The principles of transactional analysis are useful in that they add additional insights into the child role in employment relationships. Even if we accept that domestic workers collude to some extent with their employers in positioning themselves as children in the domestic service relationship, this does not diminish the outcome of such acts. In the designated role as a child, the servant becomes caricatured as her adult status is removed. Each of the three domestic workers was a mature woman, mothers with major responsibilities for home and family. Each of the employers, in assuming and accepting a 'pseudo-maternalistic' role in the relationship, inevitably devalued and denigrated their employees as women in their own right. However, irrespective of their childlike status, the 'personhood' of the three domestic workers was of paramount importance to their employers. Personal qualities were stressed, and although not always explicitly stated, deference was expected from the domestic workers by their employers. Indeed, as Gail 3-(i) openly admitted that she was adverse to a paternalistic relationship, Cloe's 3-(ii) deference may have been a contributing factor in her employer's acquiescence to a familial relationship. This is similar to Bujra's (2000: 80) findings in the Tanzania context. She too noted that it was the deferential characteristics of domestic workers that was most valued by employers. My findings in these case studies support the contention that there is an underlying contradiction within the domestic service relationship. The servants were

depersonalised but their personal qualities were integral components of the domestic service relationship.

This also adds credence to the feminist emphasis on the embodiment of labour where not only what is performed but how it is performed is of importance to the employer. It is interesting to note how Brenda 1-(i) terminated employment arrangements with domestic workers who did not conform to her expectations. She was also unhappy that her maid had better clothes than she did. Natalie-2-(i) made Rebecca 2-(ii) leave her problems outside the door when she came to work. By this action, she circumscribed the terms of Rebecca's labour embodiment. It is a speculative point but one wonders if Gail 3-(i) would have been so involved with Cloe 3-(ii) if she had not performed her duties in an acceptable manner. Anderson's (2000) arguments have centred on the notion that kindness was an instrument of power. There is another significant point, employees by their embodiment of acceptable behaviour and practices extract kindness from their employers. Assuming the role of child also would serve to promote a kindness reaction from the employer.

What is also important to note is that the employers themselves had a need and dependency on their servants. Brenda had a black nanny as a child and wanted a servant from the commencement of her marriage. This would add yet a further variation in her relationship with Jessie. She could also be viewed as the child in that she sought a mothering capacity from her domestic. Natalie was extremely lonely and fearful for her safety. This may explain why she had not reduced Rebecca's hours when there was no obvious reason for her to work full-time. Gail was vulnerable in that she and Roy had no retirement provision or medical care. The farm was not only a charity as they professed, it also maintained their work status. Gail had stated that

the farm was unsellable which does suggest that they had checked this as an option. Therefore, Cloe, along with her co-workers, was essential if the farm was to continue in operation. In all the other case studies, there was a dependency need of the majority of employers, which included such things as home security, loneliness, transference of responsibility and emotional intimacy. Interesting, all employers stressed their employees' dependency rather than their own. Perhaps to admit their own need would be an admittance of their own vulnerability and erode their role as the designators of 'otherness'. For example, in Hegelian terms if consciousness of self is achieved through supremacy in the reciprocal struggle, to need you repositions me as your 'other'. You become the mother I the child, you become the provider, I the receiver, you become the stronger I the weaker. Such realignment in the relationship could not be openly admitted or even tacitly acknowledged. Having stated this, I do believe that all the domestic workers that I interviewed were not truly aware of their employers' dependency on them.

In these three case studies I found no evidence that the deferential manner of the domestic workers was masking hidden resistance or disdain to their employers. The close relationships between the women would suggest that my findings were more in line with Newby's (1979) than Scott's (1990). Newby's analysis of 'good' relationships between farmers and their labourers resulted in the workers transferring responsibility for their circumstances to the 'system' rather than individual employers. Similarly, Jessie, Rebecca and Cloe were convinced that their individual employers were all impotent to change their circumstances. All viewed their employers as good women doing what they could. The system of apartheid had been the fulcrum of their oppression and their lives were the inevitable consequences of the regime. I asked each of them individually, if they were more hopeful for the future now that apartheid

was gone. The answers I received were ambivalent. None of the three women were hopeful for themselves as they felt that they were too old and that without an education their opportunities had now gone. The next generation was the one that would benefit from the ending of apartheid and have the chances they never did. Both Rachel and Cloe were anxious that their children and grandchildren gained an education to 'better themselves'.

Cock's 1979 research had also indicated that education of their children was a high priority for domestic workers. In many cases, the women made significant sacrifices in order to send money home for their children's educational fees. None of her respondents had any desire for their daughters to become domestic workers, but also recognised that some might have to because of the lack of employment opportunities. Twenty years on, hearing similar sentiments suggested a pattern of behaviour that was being replicated through time. Domestic servants then and currently appeared to have habituated their own circumstances, in that they were resigned to their personal 'lot in life' and had centred all their aspirations on the next generation. This patterning resurrected for me Lewis's (1959) controversial 'culture of poverty' conceptions. He argues that the poor internalise and accept a way of living, which perpetuates through the generations. Therefore, his analysis would seem a viable vehicle to explore the similarities I discovered to that of Cock's findings. In the concluding chapter of the thesis, Lewis's 'culture of poverty' will be examined to ascertain if it can offer an explanation to my habituation assessments.

CHAPTER 5: UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE EMPLOYER AND SERVANT RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, I will examine the domestic service relationships of a working class employer and a Christian employer and their Xhosa servants. The unique characteristics are situated within the employers' particular circumstances and philosophies. In addition, I will consider a domestic service relationship where the servant, in contrast to the majority of domestic workers I contacted, was educated and trained to be a teacher rather than a domestic employee. The purpose of seeking out variations in the prevailing patterns of this employment scenario was to discover if the power differential, reproduced by and through 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices, and its accompanying ideologies of difference have been challenged or bridged in any way. If I did see evidence of variations or continuity, this would achieve three things. Firstly, if these three case studies showed favourable shifts in the employment relationship this could, using Cock's study as a starting point, suggest that, in their specific instances, improvements in the pay, conditions and treatment of domestic workers were being achieved. Secondly, on the other hand, if irrespective of these differing characteristics in the domestic service relationship, the ideologies of difference are still in force, this would suggest similarities to that of Cock's findings and indicate a perpetuation of social practices in this sector of employment. Finally, still using indicators of similarities, if found, these could also be applied to Srinivas (1995) cross-cultural perspective, with the aim of seeing if the social practices having stood the test of time in the South African context, have also transcended national boundaries.

Historically, as van Onselen (1982) has shown, South African working class women have employed domestic servants in significant numbers. However, I discovered in

my fieldwork that many working class women were no longer employing servants because of their own strained financial circumstances. Therefore, in the Grahamstown area with unemployment high in both the white and black communities the employing of servants appeared to be increasingly confined to the middle class income groups. As stated elsewhere, Helen set up her domestic service agency because she was convinced that there was a niche for her business in the market place. She was assuming that labour legislation was discouraging many households from taking on servants on a permanent basis. Equally, it could be argued that this type of arrangement would suit working class employers who could have the facility of a domestic worker in an ad hoc arrangement rather than employing them on a permanent basis. Comparing the pay and conditions offered by a working class employer to that of other employers would give credence to, or challenge, the assertion by them that they were paying what they could. In addition, this is a relevant site to explore if the minimising of class differences has resulted in the diminishing of 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices. If similarities were discovered to other employers, this would imply that racial ideologies were still in force in this sector of employment.

The Christian employer belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The unique features that led me to include this specific case in this chapter were the pervasive tenets of her beliefs. The dogma of her religion was strongly egalitarian and founded on the premise that all humanity was equal because they were children of Deity. I have argued that ideologies of difference have perpetuated and flourished in the domestic service relationship. Therefore, this case study was chosen to discover if divisive domestic service relationships could be overcome by other ideological influences. I was mindful of Williams (1997: 66) when she states:

[...] I am certain that the solution to racism lies in our ability to see its ubiquity but not concede its inevitability. It lies in the collective and institutional power to make change, at least as much as with the individual will to change.

Institutionally, in moving from a system of apartheid, South Africa has challenged overt racial practices. The onus therefore now must reside in the 'individual will' to remove the more covert racial prejudices. The question in this particular case is has this employer been able to transcend racial injustices through adhering to Christian values. In addition, if there is evidence of better pay and conditions in this domestic service relationship, not only could it stand against Cock's findings but also would implicitly suggest that the other employers' justifications in the study for low wages may not be strictly true. The low wages may be paid because of racial differentials and could be viewed as manifestations of some degree of racial discrimination. In addition, as 'pseudo-maternalism', by its practices is oppositional to egalitarianism, this case study is important in assessing if Christian values have the power to transcend familial ideology based on inequality.

The domestic worker in the third case study of this chapter was different from the prevailing majority of servants in both Cock's study and my own. As an educated woman, Jane offered a stark contrast to the other domestic workers I interviewed. All these women were either illiterate or had rudimentary educational skills and knowledge. Implicitly within the content of the thesis I have suggested that the lack of education has been a decisive factor in situating domestic workers in the role of child in the domestic service relationship, increasing their vulnerability to exploitative practices and condemning them to a life of poverty in this sector of employment. I have also indicated that the stoicism of many domestic workers had roots in their conviction that educating their children would give them opportunities denied to

them. Jane was a daughter of a domestic worker. The examination of her life experiences will validate or negate not only my assertions but also the aspirations of her mother and many like her. These findings however, will be significantly diluted by the fact that her white employer funded Jane's education. Paradoxically the independence hoped for by achieving marketable skills was made possible by dependency on white benevolence. Therefore, the outcome for the domestic service relationship between Jane and her employer was imbued with complexities because of these paradoxical issues.

Case study 4: Working class employer and Xhosa maid.

4-(i) Employer's profile: - Helen.

Helen was a forty-eight year old English-speaking South African, married with teenaged twin sons. The house was a recent acquisition, as Helen and her husband Tobias had to move to cheaper accommodation in the early months of 1999 because of their limited financial resources. The home was dilapidated and needed considerable repair work. It was located on the periphery of town very close to the township. (As stated elsewhere, the real estate values of homes bordering the township had plummeted and in many cases were virtually unsellable). It consisted of a lounge, dining room / kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. All the furniture was either old or well worn. The small lounge housed an extremely large parrot who not only vocally made its presence felt, but also distributed its mess liberally across the floor. Helen and Tobias were quite clear that they were extremely poor and therefore situated in the working class. Tobias had been unfit for work for many years, due to a congenital heart defect. The family had managed on whatever work Helen could obtain. Neither had retirement nor medical care provision and stated that whenever the family needed medical assistance they had to sit alongside black patients all day in

the hospital or clinics waiting for free treatment. Irrespective of the precarious nature of Helen's employment status through the years, they have had a continuous 'stream' of domestic servants. Irene, their most recent servant had been with them for the last four years, previously to this they had employed her sister Naomi.

Helen had been retrenched (made redundant) in the early months of 1999 and had recently started a new venture. She had decided to start a domestic service agency. The idea had come to her after a conversation with a close friend. Helen's friend had been employing a servant who was stealing food and clothing from her home. The friend had wanted to sack the maid, but was frightened of repercussions due to the current labour legislation. Fortunately, the maid had left of her own volition, as she was getting married and moving to Port Elizabeth. However, Helen's friend was loath to employ a domestic again, and Helen suggested that she supplied a maid when and if the need arose. Helen felt there was an excess supply of women willing to work in this field of employment. She believed this was because 'they have not been trained to use their minds, to do something like self-employment [...].' As this business was in its very early stages Helen was keen that the quality of the work provided was to a high standard. She did not have the funds to advertise for the agency, so she planned to increase her business primarily through 'word of mouth'. Domestic service had traditionally been a sector that had relied on personal referrals within the white community. For example, white female employers informed one another through an informal network of the availability, reliability and credentials of potential servants. Helen had used this system through the years to obtain her own domestic workers and was quite optimistic that personal referrals would increase her client base.

This change in Helen's employment circumstances had necessitated a realignment of the work arrangements with Irene. When Helen had been retrenched, she had cancelled Irene's employment with her. It was not that catastrophic for Irene as she only worked two days a week for Helen and had a second employer. However, when Helen decided to set up her agency she sent for Irene from the townships. Helen persuaded Irene to leave her other employer and contact three of her own friends in the townships to come and work for Helen as the other agency workers. Helen had no formal contract of employment with the women. The employment status of the women had to be described as casual. Helen paid them on a daily basis, and only if work was available. As of June 1999, the domestics were paid R35 per day. Helen believed that her relationship with Irene had subtly altered. Irene still worked for her, but instead of Helen being the 'Madam' in the home she now worked along side her 'girls' in the agency. Work Helen personally had been involved in included such things as scrubbing floors, washing windows, dusting and polishing, shampooing carpets and ironing.

I asked Helen how the white women she worked for felt about her working together with her domestics, and how her staff themselves felt about it. Helen stated that reactions had varied from surprise to disapproval. Helen was in no doubt that the disapproval was because she was working alongside black women. This did not mean to imply that these white women objected to domestic work, only that paid domestic work was now a black preserve. Helen believed that her relationship with her four domestics had been enhanced by her participation in the work tasks. In her opinion, she felt that her 'girls' had not felt as if they were being monitored, but rather assisted in the jobs that had to be done. Implicitly Helen was suggesting that the racial distance between her and them was being bridged. Helen did not personally know

what her domestics thought about the working arrangements, as she had not asked them, and they had not told her. I asked the question of her employees, whether or not they liked Helen working with them. Maureen, acting as spokesperson for all of them, told me they thought it was a good arrangement, but by far the best for them was the opportunity to work together rather than working for a madam in a home by themselves.

Working with her domestic workers had produced its frictions as the following account illustrates. Helen does not state specifically that she thought her domestic worker was acting like a child but there are nuances in her description of the event, which suggest that she did.

Take the other day, Benice said, "We must take this blind down."

"You can't take this blind down, you would need a screwdriver and what have you to take this blind down? Just open it up and clean it, it will be fine."

Today I was washing windows. I was getting so frustrated with Benice again. I'm cleaning and the sunlight's shining in so I can't see.

I say to Benice "Is it clean now?" (I can't see if the window is clean.)

"Yes."

I go and stand at the other end of the lounge and it's smudged.

"There's a smudge there."

"Yes."

She looked at me and said, "What do you ask?"

"Is the window clean?"

"No" she says.

I suppose because I am not one of them I got frustrated.

The last statement was ambiguous and could be interpreted that Helen saw herself as racially different or that she was still their employer even when she worked with them. Helen had discussed with me the intimacy and camaraderie of her workers and I would therefore suggest the latter explanation. There is an irrefutable fact, irrespective of the personal nature of domestic service, it is an employment relationship and as such power will rest with the employer. Therefore, the question has to be asked do racial differences magnify the power of the employer? Would Benice's suggestion to take the blinds down been so summarily dismissed if she had been white?

Helen, in her description of her relationship with Irene, did not utilise familial terminology. Irene was a close friend and someone she had complete trust in. Helen also stated that Irene was her confidant and that she had no hesitation in discussing all her problems and concerns with her. Helen had 'got to know' Irene through her sister Naomi. When Naomi had become too ill to work, Irene had replaced her. Helen described Irene as an extremely private person and the information she knew about her had been gleaned from past conversations with Naomi about the family. Irene had never asked for a loan or aid from Helen in the four years she had worked for her. In response to the question of what quality did Helen like best about Irene, she made the following in-depth reply:

One, she is honest, and she is not pushy, very down to earth, she is an all round nice person. This is going to sound strange [...] she is a very humble person, I don't want to say she knows her place because that's not what I mean. She doesn't take advantage of friendship or kindness [...] I've had people come and work for me who have taken advantage of kindness and compassion. They really have taken me for a ride. Irene has never done that. She has always been kind, loving, humble person who has come in. [...] I've never had to say to her this isn't done properly, you know what I mean?

Helen felt that working together with Irene in the domestic service agency had strengthened their friendship. Irene was also a great asset as she took charge of the other domestic service agency workers which made the task of running the agency that much easier.

4–(ii) Servants profile: - Irene.

Irene did not wish me to visit her home but was happy to describe it. In her words, it was very small with one room acting as kitchen, living room and bathroom. There were three other small rooms, which were used as bedrooms. The home had electricity and an outside water tap. Irene's dream was to build on a bathroom and have inside water so she and her family all could have baths when they wanted to rather than having to fill and use the tin bath in the main room. Irene truly believed that working for the agency would enable her to personally save the funds to do this. She could not see how the government could help her. As there were so many in similar positions to her self, she did not believe it was possible for 'them' to give everyone better homes. Irene was the only one in her family with a job, so it was up to her to do the 'best' for them. I asked Irene if she thought she earned enough money. All she said was, 'I manage'. She, like the majority of the other domestic workers I interviewed, thought her employer was paying her what she could. If Helen 'made money' from the domestic service agency, Irene was sure that she and the other agency workers would have a corresponding increase in wages.

Irene was in her late fifties and had an extended of family of about ten or eleven people to support. These included a husband, who was not working, her sister Naomi, who was now unfit to work as a domestic, and numerous grandchildren. Irene's three children were all grown and had left their own children with her as they went to find work outside the area. Although sending money for their children, this was

spasmodic and meagre in amount. Irene was keen that all her grandchildren received an education. She believed that the ending of apartheid would have a benefit for them but would not make any difference to the lives of older people like herself. I asked Irene how long she was going to carry on working. She explained that there was a lot of her family, who needed her to work, so she would work as long as she was able. The only time she would stop was if she became ill. Irene, like the majority of the domestic workers I interviewed, had never had a pension scheme with any of her employers. I asked her if she was worried about the future, and I was told that she, like the rest of the domestic workers she knew, had learnt to take every day as it came. Irene further explained that the black community in Grahamstown lived with high unemployment and as such no one could make long term plans. Despite the higher risks of working with the agency, that is, lack of job security, Irene felt the job satisfaction was sufficient compensation to make the risks worthwhile.

Irene had been a domestic all of her adult life. She could read and write but had never had any opportunities to do any other type of work. At one time, when she was much younger, she had been a domestic in a boarding house. She had found this interesting as she had met many different people. Part of her duties had been waiting on tables, which she enjoyed because it was not so lonely as her other cleaning duties. She had worked for many years for Mrs Kingsley and was very sad when the family moved to Umtata. However, she was happy now she could work for the domestic service agency. This was far better than working for a madam in the home. I asked Irene if she felt worried about changing her job at her time of life. She told me that she was not concerned. The work tasks were the same; the only difference was that she now had the opportunity to work with her friends. In particular as she was getting older, there was someone there to help if she got too tired. In addition, the days at work

passed so much quicker when you were able to work with someone, you were not as lonely and the work did not seem as hard. Maybe, she thought, working for the agency would help her work for more years than she had expected to as a domestic worker in the home. Her friends all gave her support and would help her if she needed them.

4-(iii) Domestic service relationship:

Before becoming an agency worker, Irene had worked for two days a week as a domestic servant for Helen and was paid R25 per day. In the four years, that Helen had employed her, Irene had never had a pay rise. In this case, surprisingly, wages were slightly higher than those paid by some of the wealthier employers. For example, if Helen had employed Irene on a full-time basis the monthly wage would have equated to R500. However, this is based on the assumption that Helen would maintain the rate at R25 per day. It cannot be assumed that part-time rates would equate to the full-time rate, and therefore the likelihood of Helen paying R500 per month would seem slim. Irrespective of this, the evidence would suggest that Helen was in line with other employers in the payment to her servant. The conclusion to be drawn is, that the claim of many employers that they paid what they could may not be completely accurate and that there is some degree of exploitation in their pay arrangements. An important fact to note was that Irene's hours were also considerably shorter than those of other domestic workers. This is another indicator that Helen's pay and conditions set in relation to other employers are better than the majority. As their class location was higher than Helen's this does suggest that these employers are to a certain extent exploiting their servants.

The hours of work were flexible in that Irene had started work at 9.00am and finished in the early afternoon, leaving as soon as her allotted tasks had been completed. Helen and Tobias informed me that they were aware that they had paid Irene low wages, but always ensured that she had a substantial mid-day meal with them. As this was a part-time arrangement there was no contract of employment, no holiday pay or pension arrangements. As the employment in the domestic service agency was on a casual basis Helen maintained the arrangement of only paying Irene when she worked. The pay was slightly better in that it was R35 per day, but Helen could not guarantee regular work for Irene and the other agency workers. Helen employed 'the girls' on a daily basis. All of them would come to her home early in the morning and she would inform them if they had any work that day. Helen did vocalise her commitment to continue the daily rate payments even if full-time work became regular for all of her domestic workers. She also stated that when the agency became more established she would 'formalise' the employment conditions with the 'girls'. Irene had not waited for the casual nature of the work with the agency to become more permanent. She left the employment of her second employer, so she was completely reliant on the agency for work opportunities.

On initial examination, this domestic service relationship appeared to indicate that a lessening of the class chasm had resulted in a corresponding reduction in racial distance. For example, Helen working with Irene and the other agency workers in household tasks. However, it is important to note that Helen was not unique in working with black women in the home. Van Onselen (1982) historically had indicated that a black domestic worker had not been solely responsible for household duties but would work side by side with her employer in the household. This did not necessarily mean that the notion of racial superiority had been overcome. There were

indicators that Helen had felt ideologically superior to Irene and her co-workers.

The above incident with Beatrice was 'pseudo-maternalistic' in the exchange between the two women. A more specific example of Helen's 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices was shown when one of her workers asked for an advance on her wages in order to purchase a microwave. Before agreeing to the required money, Helen went to inspect the merchandise to see if it was worth purchasing. (This incident is related in more detail in p9-10 of the thesis). When deciding to set up her agency Helen 'sent for' Irene from the townships, who duly came and acquiesced to Helen's requests. It must not be forgotten that Irene left her permanent job with her other employer to work for Helen on a casual basis. In addition, whilst Irene had worked as a domestic for Helen the terms of the employment relationship had been totally controlled by her. To reiterate, in four years Irene had not been given any pay increases, and perhaps the more significant point to remember is the fact that Irene had never discussed her wages with Helen or asked for an increase. The unanswered questions are, would Helen have paid the same type of wages to a white woman and not increased her wages through the years? Equally, would a white woman never ask for an increase in her wages and would she readily comply with a casual employment contract when she had an existing one? The probable answer would be that white women are more likely to be paid better wages and be more challenging. The point is that the 'chains of otherness' are denser for black employees, in that they are designated as inferior because of their race as well as class position. Therefore, for them to expect or demand more requires a breaking of their designated role as 'the other' in the domestic service relationship. This would be unlikely as the kindness of the employer disguises the fact that the 'chains of otherness' are in force. The employee therefore sees only the entrapment of the wider societal forces and is oblivious to the personal impositions of the employer.

The friendship Helen had with Irene was specific to the employment relationship.

Like the majority of the other parties in the domestic service relationships, the women did not socialise together outside working hours, and Helen had never been invited to Irene's home. Reciprocity of confidences was also absent from the relationship. Helen discussed intimate matters with Irene, the information Helen had about Irene's private life was collated from other sources. The very fact that Irene preferred working for the agency rather than as a domestic does strongly suggest that the ties of friendship Helen stressed may not have been as significant for Irene. It is irrefutable that distance between the employer and domestic cannot be completely removed because of the very nature of the relationship. Irene was dependent on Helen for her wages, her job, supervision of her work tasks, all of which were obstacles to true friendship. However, Irene did state that she had a close relationship with Helen and that she loved her. She also stated that she still missed her previous employer who had moved to Umtata. Irene like the majority of the other domestic workers believed that Helen paid her what she could. She had implicit faith in Helen and believed that the agency work would 'eventually' give her the opportunity to earn more money. When this 'happened' Irene was going to ask Helen to set up a saving scheme for her so that she could pay to have a bathroom added to her home in her township. Similarly, to the other domestic service workers, Irene did not question why it was that there was a difference to her standard of living to that of Helen's.

Irene's refusal to let me visit her home was explained as follows, 'Madam, you won't like our homes, they're not what you're used to. We don't live like you do.' I realised from her remarks that in situating Helen and Tobias within the working class this had been based on white criteria and definitions. The 'dilapidated' home was relatively far superior to Irene's own home and as such, she perceived the distance

between herself and her employer as far greater than I had. Indeed Helen herself remarked that her home was 'palatial' in comparison to some of the homes in the townships. This example gives some explanation to Srinivas' (1995:272) observation that countries with the highest income differentials had the highest servant ratios. Domestic workers, in relation to their employers, are significantly materially disadvantaged and consequently class, as well as racial divisions can be maximised. Furthermore, class positioning can be obscured and even realigned when adding the dynamic of racial differences. For example, Helen, by white criteria, was situated within the working class, but Irene, also within the working class, was far lower in the social stratum than Helen. Income differentials are facilitated by racial inequalities and these in turn exacerbate the distance between races, which then sustains and perpetuates the income divide. These wider societal factors thus serving to entrap and maintain the domestic worker in the 'chains' of being the 'other'.

Another significant remark that Irene made was that she felt her relationship with Helen had altered since she had become an agency worker and not a servant. 'She was like my sister, she's now like my mother'. I explored the situating of Helen in the mother role with all of the agency workers in a joint interview. The following extract from my field notes is illuminating. (Maureen acted as spokesperson for Irene and the other two agency workers).

Do you feel like family together?

Yes. We are sisters.

Does Helen feel like family too?

Yes.

What is she then, friend, daughter, mother, sister?

[They all consulted together in Xhosa]

Just like a mother.

Not a sister?

No, just like a mother.

Why?

'cos you ask, "Oh Mummy what do I do now?" She sorts it out for us.

You feel close to Helen then?

Yes, she's a good woman.

The remarks about 'mummy', Irene and the others found hilariously funny, which does raise a few questions. I speculated from the remark whether these women in their collectivity had recognised the incongruity of their perception of a younger woman being placed in the mother role in the relationship. Yet, by acknowledging maternalism in the relationship, this could be construed as a tacit acceptance of their dependency on Helen. The humour thus becomes a statement that this dependency was not through volition but because of their lack of viable alternatives. Therefore, Irene's use of familial ideology to explain her shifting relationship with Helen could be more complex than her simply assuming the role of child in the relationship. In shifting the description of herself from sister to that of daughter suggests that, Irene had grasped the implications of moving from a permanent position to that of a casual employee. Irene had acknowledged that her dependency had increased. Perhaps instead of interpreting her actions as one of gullibility to the dictates of Helen, may be Irene has quantified the risk factor of becoming an agency worker against the prospect of potentially earning higher wages.

The incident with the domestic agency workers also has Transactional Analysis (TA) implications. 'Childlike' behaviour cannot always be interpreted as being reflective

of the Child-ego state. Similar to Scott's (1990) observations that deference can hide resistance, the role of child in the relationship could be a mask that disguises adult awareness and behaviour. The reasons for 'playing' the child are diverse and could incorporate such things as accommodating the expectations and demands of the employer, or at the other end of the spectrum, a cynical disdain for the 'madam' of the house. This may even be the manifestation of an intuitive understanding that in their labour as a domestic worker their 'personhood' is being demanded as part of the transaction. Indeed a 'personhood' that has to conform to set parameters in order to obtain and maintain their position. It is important to remember that when Rollins (1985) covertly sought employment as a domestic worker she had to change both her clothes and manner in order to be hired. Therefore, in their public acknowledgements of being the child in the relationship the agency workers revealed adult perceptions. In maintaining the role of child, this would also indicate a hidden adult agenda. The criteria for the Adult ego-state is, 'responding to situations with all my present resources as a grown-up' (Stewart, 1999: 20). From their respective Adult-ego states, these women had some recognition, the level of which is difficult to quantify, that a 'childlike' performance was a 'resource' in their positioning in the domestic service relationship.

Case Study 5: Christian employer and Xhosa maid.

5-(i) Employer's profile: - Katrina.

Katrina's husband died in 1997 and their one daughter had married and moved away. The home was too big so Katrina decided to sell and move to a smaller property. Her new home was central to Grahamstown and this meant it was convenient for work and the shops. Her home consisted of a large lounge, kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom. Although comparatively small compared to the other employers' homes,

the furnishings were expensive and Katrina had many modern appliances throughout her house. She had a full-time job in a local doctor's surgery as a receptionist and secretary. She was a participating member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and committed to implementing Christian principles and values in her life on a daily basis. This entailed attempting to be kind, charitable, honest and having integrity in all her dealings. Through the years, she had always employed a domestic worker in a full-time capacity. When her children were young, she had needed the 'help' as she had been in full-time employment and required someone to care for them and see to the household duties. Even though now widowed, she still felt she needed the services of a domestic. She stated the following reasons:

When I come home from work, I am mentally exhausted. I don't want to come home and have to battle doing this and that. I know that I can trust her, **[servant]** that she is always here. I know my house is being looked after. If she wasn't here they'd **[potential thieves]** try to break in. They must know that I am at work all day. I feel safer from a security point of view having her here.

Katrina was fifty-four years of age and English-speaking. She felt like a 'black cloud' had been lifted off South Africa with the ending of apartheid. She told me that it made her angry when she heard whites say that they had not participated in apartheid. She remarked, 'How can they say that? It was all around us. I remember, black employees would have a separate Christmas party to us. We couldn't sit down in a restaurant together'. She went on to state that she had felt powerless to stop what she was seeing. 'We've taught this people to hate, and I'm sure many still do.' Katrina's face was stiff when she spoke and she had great difficulty in smiling. One side of her face had been crushed when the car she and her husband were driving was stoned by a group of black teenage boys. The incident happened on a road close to the township in 1992. The windscreen of the car had been smashed and a petrol bomb landed at her

feet. Her husband did not stop the car but just kept driving. Katrina said, 'I just kept praying that the thing on the floor wouldn't go off. We'd both be dead if it had'. Her husband drove straight to the doctor's surgery where Katrina worked and from there, they went to the hospital. Her husband had sustained minor cuts and bruises, but Katrina's injuries had been far more serious. She vividly recalled her left eye hanging on her face. Katrina lost the sight of the eye and in addition, her jaw had been broken in seven places. Fortunately, the fuse on the petrol bomb had 'gone out'. Katrina was to spend months receiving treatment. Her crushed cheek was fitted with a permanent plate and for several weeks, her jaw was wired together. She informed me that the worst thing for her was the fact that the perpetrators had been young boys. Katrina felt that the white community had to accept some responsibility for these acts of violence. 'You cannot treat a people like this without there being consequences'.

I asked Katrina if this attack had altered her attitude to the black community. She did not think that it had. 'I don't carry hatred or antagonism. I can't blame every black person who walks the earth.' She then informed me that her black maid Zenith had become a 'close friend' to her and that her skin colour was irrelevant to their relationship together. Indeed of all her friends Zenith had been the one most upset by the attack. When Zenith had visited her in hospital she had 'gone crazy' and was so upset and sorry that 'her' people had done this. Zenith had worked for Katrina for approximately ten years. Katrina stated that the principles of apartheid had never influenced her treatment of Zenith, as she had always believed it to be 'an abhorrence and abomination before God'. Therefore, apartheid's passing had not shifted the terms of their relationship. Katrina described herself as extremely 'lucky' to employ Zenith and that she was the best maid she had ever employed. It was only by chance that she had managed to 'get' her. Katrina's last maid was leaving as she was moving out of the area and Katrina mentioned to a white friend that she would have 'to look'

for a new domestic. Her friend was having to 'get rid' of one of her maids as she was employing two and could no longer afford to pay for both of them. She recommended Zenith as honest and trustworthy.

Through the years, Katrina has found this to be true. As Zenith is left in the home for many hours unsupervised, it was important that Katrina could be sure of her integrity. With past maids there had been problems. One maid had stolen clothes, small items of jewellery and ornaments. Katrina said that she would not have dismissed her if she had simply been stealing food. As a mother, she probably would have wanted to feed her family better. However, to steal her 'things' was something that Katrina could not tolerate. She gave her a month's wages and dismissed her. Katrina could leave money lying around the house and Zenith would never touch it. In response to the question of what quality Katrina liked best about Zenith, she replied that it was her pleasant nature that she admired the most.

'Even when I tell her that she hasn't done it properly. For instance, there's dust there even when she has dusted. She's not sulky. She doesn't walk around grumpy. Another reason I like her is she laughs, always laughing. She's forgotten that she has been told off in no time.

Katrina felt that although Zenith worked for her that their relationship was far more intimate than employer and employee. Katrina would like to think that Zenith could always come to her with any problems that she might have and that as a 'friend' she would do her best to help solve the difficulty.

Katrina did have one major concern. Her daughter had asked her to go and live with her and she had decided to do so. The problem was that this meant leaving Grahamstown and severing the employment relationship with Zenith. She had made the decision not to tell Zenith, as she would be worried about her own future. Katrina

had decided that she personally would find a new employer for her. As a doctor's receptionist she met many people and would ask the patients as they came for treatment if they knew of anyone who needed a maid. Only when she had found a new employer would she tell Zenith that she was leaving and would introduce her to her 'new Madam'. Katrina was concerned that she found alternative employment for Zenith, as she was her only means of support. However, Katrina was committed to the move and would have to continue with her plans even if she was unsuccessful in her search. Zenith did have grown up children who had jobs and she was hopeful that they would help support their mother.

5-(ii) Servant's profile: - Zenith

Zenith's home consisted of three rooms, a lounge/kitchen and two bedrooms. It had electricity and an outside water tap. It was 'small' but only she and her husband lived there now. Katrina had bought her a 'plot' in the township and she was planning to build a 'small' house there for when she retired. Many houses in the township now had bathrooms and this was what she wanted more than anything in her new house. Zenith was not sure where the money would come from for her new home, but it would not cost a lot because it could be built by 'themselves'. However, Katrina, like the majority of the other domestics I interviewed, was not planning on retirement for a long time. She wanted to work for Katrina until she was 'too old' to do so. She described 'Katrina' as the 'best' employer she had ever worked for and liked coming to work every day for her. She also liked 'taking care' of Katrina's house especially because it had 'lovely' ornaments in it. Zenith expressed no resentment that her home was vastly different to Katrina's and said she was happy that she had such a good job. She told me that she loved Katrina and felt close to her. However, it is important to note that she in conversation to me always referred to Katrina as 'Madam'. I also

noted that when she spoke to Katrina she addressed her as such. Having spent many years with Katrina she had also grown to love her daughter and had been sad when Katrina's husband had died.

Zenith was forty-eight years of age and married. Her husband had not worked for many years and she had supported the family for as long as she could remember. I asked her if he was not well enough to work. Zenith replied that he was well but because of unemployment could not get a job. However, all of their three sons were now working and she was proud of them all. None of them lived close by as they had moved away from Grahamstown to find work. Her eldest son worked for a security firm her second son was a teacher and her youngest son was a clerk. She did not get to see them very often but was 'so happy' they all had jobs. Zenith had worked all her adult life as a domestic worker and wanted her sons to have an education. She herself could read and write well, but even this was 'not good enough' to get her a better job. Domestic work was a 'nice' job but it did not pay a lot. I asked her about her wages and Zenith replied that Katrina paid her good wages and gave her 'many things' to help her and her husband. In the townships, there were many people without work and life was very hard for them. Zenith felt that this meant lots of women were desperate for jobs and to get one was not easy. She did not feel this would change quickly and young people would move a way, like her sons had, to find work.

I asked Zenith what other job would she have liked to have done. Her response, after some time was, 'a social worker'. I asked why a social worker and she replied she liked to help people. She found this question hard because it was something she had never really thought about. Her mother had been a domestic worker, and this was the only job for people 'like them'. This was why she was 'so happy' one of her sons had

become a teacher. Her grandchildren would all have more than she had.

Apartheid's 'going' would mean it was better for them now as they were going to the same schools white children were. This was good. Zenith remarked that apartheid had taken away her 'dignity', and her grandchildren now could be 'proud'. I asked her why she had her 'dignity' back. She laughed and said, 'I not stand in lines any more'. When going to the post office or the town hall she had to stand in the 'black line' but all this was gone and she could now stand anywhere she wanted to. It had made a difference to her.

Zenith felt that her work situation had not altered at all since apartheid had gone, but she herself felt much happier. She states:

I'm not scared any more.

What were you scared of?

Whites. They could do anything to you. It's a nice time now. All people are friends now. You're not scared any more. I can go where I want to go now. It was very hard times before.

Zenith remembered Katrina's attack and was still very upset that it had happened to her. No-one was safe and it was not only white people who had been attacked by the black community. During the last years, black people had been murdered in the Grahamstown area. Zenith was relieved that this had now stopped. There was still violence around but it was not as frightening as it had been then. She stated that she liked working for the whites and all of her employers had been 'kind' to her. She felt happy now all the time, she liked looking after Katrina's home and life was good.

I was mindful that Katrina was leaving the area, so I asked Zenith how she would feel about working for a different employer. She told me that she would not like to. I asked if she had the same wages would it matter that much. She explained to me that

Katrina was 'her friend'. I asked her did Katrina feel like a family member, and she repeated, 'No. She's my friend'. Zenith felt that Katrina would always help her if she could and that she would do the same for her. Zenith said that she had never asked for a loan, but knew that if she had Katrina would have helped her. Now that her children had grown, she only had to support her husband so she could manage on her money. Zenith further informed me that Katrina would often send her home with meals for her and her husband so she did not have to buy much food. During the day, she could eat what she liked in Katrina's house. There was samp and beans in the cupboard for her. Katrina never ate it, as she did not like it, but bought it so Zenith could eat it if she wanted to. Zenith hoped she would work for Katrina as long as she had her job at the doctors, and Katrina was going to work for a long time like she was. I finally asked her if Katrina retired early what would she do. Zenith replied she would look for another job because her husband did not have a pension and she had to look after him as well as herself. Finally, I asked Zenith if her sons could not help her. She was going to ask them to help build her home, but money was 'not good' for them, as their families were reliant on them. Zenith did not want to ask her sons for help with money because their own children needed their financial support..

5-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

Zenith's hours of work were from 7.45am–4.00pm Monday to Friday together with one Saturday morning per month. Her basic salary was R400 per month and she was given an additional annual bonus of R400. Katrina also indicated that she had increased Zenith's wages on an annual basis and would continue to do so. A large Christmas hamper of food, regular food parcels to take home, and cast-off clothes and household items supplemented the wages. Zenith's medical expenses were also taken care of. Katrina had also recently purchased a plot of land in the township for Zenith

to build her new home. Holidays exactly matched Katrina's own, so when ever she had time off Zenith did also. This meant that Zenith did not work on public bank holiday and had six weeks annual holiday. Katrina also stated that she had to send Zenith home on many occasions because she even came to work when she was ill. Katrina sent her home and would ensure she had medicines if required.

These wages were similar to those of other domestic workers in the area. This does seem to suggest that although a legalised minimum wage was not in force that employers 'informally' had set the parameters for wages in this sector of employment. The networking to find domestic servants would easily facilitate employers' knowledge of, and co-operation in payments to domestic servants. In addition, the fact that there was a large pool of unemployed domestic workers within the area would also be a significant factor in the perpetuation of low wages. Katrina's religious creed had not resulted in her stepping out of this employer driven framework for wage standards. However, the benefits in kind she offered to Zenith were higher than the majority of employers that I interviewed. This therefore would suggest that she had taken steps to reduce the exploitation of her servant. The paid holidays were also twice or three times greater than all the other domestic servants I interviewed.

The calculations planned for the implementation of the minimum wage are pertinent. Included in the figure of remuneration to employees are any benefits in kind that the employer provides. Such things as food, accommodation and utilities, clothing etc. will be included as part of the minimum wage. It will be the employer and not the state, which will quantify the monetary value of benefits in kind. It is highly probable that the employer will be extremely generous in that calculation. In addition, the minimum wage will not be an national figure set across all of South Africa, the figure

set will vary across regions. Factors such as average income in the region, employment figures and demographic ratios will all have bearing on the minimum wage implemented in each area. As Katrina's benefits in kind were relatively more substantial than those of other employers, this does lift her into a higher position than first assumed in the measurement of wages paid. The difficulty is quantifying exactly the value of benefits in kind in the various domestic service relationships. With only a crude estimate of the differential between Katrina's pay and conditions for Zenith to that of other employers and their servants, it can only be suggested that her Christian philosophy has positively improved this domestic service relationship in this respect. In accepting this, Katrina's position is at variance to Cock's findings and therefore there is an implicit suggestion, in this specific case, that racial discrimination through inadequate wages is starting to be addressed on an individual basis.

In considering if Katrina's egalitarian religious beliefs have resulted in an ideological bridging of the racial divide, I do not think that they have. Benefits in kind in themselves have contradictory outcomes. On the one hand they appear to draw the giver and receiver closer together, but at the same time widens the ideological distance between them. The employer has the flexibility of giving them or not as she is under no 'obligation' to do so unlike a fixed wage. Therefore, on an ad hoc basis, benefits in kind are totally under her control and are perceived by the receiver as a 'gift' rather than entitlement. Applying Anderson's (2000) kindness and power assertions, these types of actions will also enhance the power differential within the domestic service relationship because the employee's sense of gratitude is increased by her employer's largesse. The domestic worker does not have a choice in what she receives but is given what her employer sees fit. In a sense, it is another means of negating her as a person in that her ability to decide for herself what she needs is

removed from her. Increased wages allow her to spend the money, as she desires, low wages make her ever more dependent on any extras her employer will give. Employers, even if well intentioned as may be argued in Katrina's case, cannot escape the consequences of using benefits in kind to supplement the wages of the servants. Katrina may adhere to her egalitarian beliefs and feel that the benefits in kind she gives to Zenith are an outward confirmation that she is fulfilling her Christian code of being charitable. The unintended outcome, because of the nature of benefits in kind, is an increased dependence on the part of the employee and a widening gulf between them as equals. For the employee she is left with the knowledge that she has 'earned' her wages but has been 'given' her extra benefits.

The friendship between the two women becomes mediated by the pay arrangements. If Katrina had decided to pay above the norm in the sector, this would have relieved the friendship of the obscuring outcomes of the dispensing of benefits in kind. Zenith's notion of 'Madam is my friend' highlights the complexities within the relationship with Katrina. The social distance between the women made it impossible for her to refer to her employer by her first name, but at the same time, the intimacy of the relationship resulted in genuine bonding. However, it cannot be assumed that the terms of their relationship had been negotiated exclusively between them. The wider prevailing social practices will have impinged on their individual perceptions and actions. Domestic servants historically have always called their employers 'Madam'. As the thesis has argued, paternalistic perceptions predate apartheid and are a legacy of colonialism. Katrina, and other employers, was unlikely to question the implications of benefits in kind, as they were normalised actions because of their longevity in South African domestic service. Equally, the precarious position of Zenith induced Katrina to take on a maternal role. For example, Zenith's dependence

and lack of viable employment alternatives engendered Katrina's quest for a new employer for Zenith. 'Taking care of' can be criticised because of its parental implications, but the desperation of those in need may well evoke such a response. Zenith as an employee behaved and conformed to Katrina's expectations of a servant, that is, her embodied labour met the required specifications. To repeat an earlier point, the embodiment of acceptable labour plus a childlike demeanour extracts from the employer the kindness that is required. Zenith implicitly is securing for herself her employer's commitment to seeing to her needs.

Case Study 6: Employer with educated Xhosa maid.

6-(i) Employer's profile: - Claire.

Claire's home was situated on the outskirts of the town centre. It was a detached single storey building, which consisted of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and three bedrooms. The furniture was simple and could be described as comfortable rather than elegant. Clearly none of the furniture I saw was a recent purchase. She, like my interviewee Helen 4-(i), owned a large parrot whose cage not only dominated the room where it hung, but its vehement squawking seriously impeded conversation. In respect of the other homes I visited, Claire's property would be placed in the middle income range. Claire was at the time of interview, a forty-seven year old single woman who had given up a career as a art teacher and had taken a temporary job as a secretary whilst she trained for the 'ministry'. Claire had been a teacher for twenty years but had decided that she wanted to pursue a religious vocation in the latter years of her life. In order to become an 'ordained person' in the Anglican Church she required a theology degree. Financial considerations curtailed her from studying full-time, therefore she decided to take on secretarial work whilst she studied part-time. She found this type of work was less stressful than teaching and

liberated more time for study. The downside was that she had to take a drastic cut in income, as she now earned far less as a secretary than she did as a teacher. Claire found it quite ironic that at this time of her life when her finances were so strained that she was employing three servants —two maids, Alvera and Jane, and a garden boy, Charles. She explained that her reason for doing so was the fact that she believed none of them would find alternative employers and were reliant on her.

Her servant arrangements had become quite complicated. Her maid, Alvera, had been with her for some considerable time and was now fifty-eight years of age. She had worked for Claire on a full-time basis and both were ‘happy’ with this arrangement. However, Claire had become extremely concerned about Jane. Claire at one time had employed Jane’s mother as a domestic and had paid for Jane’s education. Jane had been trained to become a teacher but was unable to find work as such and was consequently ‘sitting around’ in the township all day. Claire had decided that Jane needed some kind of work and consequently would employ Jane on a two-day basis. She remarked that the standard of Jane’s work in comparison to Alvera’s was poor but that something needed to be done. Jane had suffered with depression through the years and Claire was extremely concerned that her present circumstances could trigger a downward spiral in her mental health. Therefore, she decided to employ Alvera on a three-day basis and employ Jane for the other two days. Claire explained that she did not simply reduce Alvera’s hours but found an alternative employer for her for the two days she was no longer required. Claire sought out the Reverend at her local church and asked him to take on Alvera as a domestic. He and his wife agreed, and therefore Claire was able to proceed with her plan to offer some work to Jane.

I asked Claire if the standard of Jane's work was so inadequate why was she employing her. Her education was completed and she was now a woman in her own right. Claire stated in reply that she felt 'obliged' to. She further stated that she had not realised the commitment that would be required to Jane by the 'simple' act of paying for her education. It had become far more than a financial transaction and 'seeing to Jane' had at times seemed like a very heavy responsibility and is something that Claire would rather not have had. The involvement with Jane was now far deeper than envisaged or wanted. For example, when Claire had resided in Cape Town Jane had come to live with her whilst she looked for a job in the locality. Servants were so expensive in the region that Claire had ceased to employ them whilst residing in the Cape area. Jane had behaved like a 'daughter of the house' and had not worked in the home. There were also further emotional problems that Claire had to deal with in her relationship with Jane. She states:

She [**Jane**] has had hard times when she has been very depressed. She went through a stage when I was in Cape Town. When she lived with me she was in such a state. It's [**Jane's depression**] a throw back from her mother's death and her diet. She discovered that eating anything like meat, she can't eat it, it seems to do something to her metabolism. She has been on anti-depressants for many years.

Claire had become personally involved in seeking out a medical diagnosis and treatment for Jane. Though not specifically stated, the implication was made that she had been responsible for meeting the costs of some of the medical treatment. Claire felt that Jane was unlikely to find work as a teacher whilst she continued to reside in Grahamstown and therefore would be 'with her' for many more years. Claire in describing her relationship to Jane did use familial ideology. She made the following reply, 'I suppose like a daughter. [...] she is actually quite immature in herself.'

Claire expressed real regret that she could not pay her servants a 'living wage', but stated that this was as much as she could afford. She was convinced that many other whites in the Eastern Cape were in similar circumstances to her own and therefore their domestics' wages too would be extremely low. She put forward the view that if the minimum wage became statute that she along with the majority of whites would have no alternative but to dismiss their servants. As earlier stated, Claire whilst resident in Cape Town had been able to function without servants. In many ways, she felt her life would be less irksome without them, as servants were a great responsibility. Claire believed that there was a positive element to the current employment of domestics over that of the past. The pay of domestics may still be appalling, but their conditions of employment, in her opinion, had radically improved. Claire claimed that this was 'an age thing', that the younger generation treated black people far better than their predecessors did. (This opinion was a similar one to that expressed by Gail's 3-(i)). Claire related the following incident with her own mother to illustrate the point:

Take my mother, she lives in an old age complex, and if I go away she comes to look after my menagerie. And she just expects certain things of the black servant [...] it is very frustrating with her. She would tell tales on them when I came home. She [**Alvera**] didn't clean or she didn't do this.

"Yes, but she did make you breakfast, she did make you scones."

"Yes, but she didn't ... and she had her friends for tea almost"

"Tea?"

What she meant was that friends came and stood in the lounge and "talked for hours". Then I actually explained to her,

"Mum, Alvera is involved in the Mothers' Union at church. This is the only way these women communicate. It's like me inviting someone at church to come to my place of work to talk to me because I don't have any other time, and my boss is quite happy."

"Oh but..."

As far as my mother is concerned it is disgusting that Jane uses the same bathroom as I do [...] They can wash your dishes, clean your bathroom, clean your toilet, but not sit on it. It's amazing.

Claire felt that the treatment of servants would overall continue to improve. There is a point to consider with this sentiment. Why did Claire believe treatment would improve? Implicitly she was suggesting that the removal of apartheid had invoked a recognition in the younger generation that social practices had to be re-evaluated. Many domestic service relationships in other contexts have indicated racially motivated abuse. Therefore, to argue that apartheid was the instigator of such practices cannot be substantiated. However, if Claire is right, the removal of apartheid has heightened the awareness of racial impositions within the domestic service relationship. Therefore, it could be concluded that this employer was asserting that apartheid's demise was impacting on this sector of employment. Claire also believed that when the South African economy grew then the wages of domestics would be increased in line with their improved working conditions. Implicitly Claire was arguing that the poor pay of domestics was not the outcome of racial discrimination but rather the result of the strained financial resources of their white employers.

6-(ii) Servant's Profile: - Jane.

Jane considered herself as a transient, as although she shared accommodation with one of her sisters, this was only temporary until she found employment. Her sister was divorced and had five children all living at home, so living conditions at home were extremely cramped. The home had four rooms, a main room that also had a stove in the corner and three others that acted as bedrooms. The house had electricity but no inside water. There was an outside water tap in the back yard. This was the old family home, and Jane and her sister had grown up in the house. Both parents

were now dead, which left five children, all girls, in the family. The other sisters still regarded the house as 'their home too' and spasmodically would come with their children or partners for protracted visits. Space was then a major problem, but far worse was the behaviour of two of the sisters when they came to stay. Both had serious drinking problems and whilst there were permanently drunk and abusive. Jane wished she could escape but knew the only way was if she could find a job. Her health had not been good and her stressful living conditions often made her feel agitated and desperate. To relieve the tension she felt she often went to church. She says:

I can't even pay a pair of shoes or women's things that I need. I'm in this situation-it's terrible. That's why I like to go to church. It sometimes calms me down. It's a place where I can feel a little bit better. I don't blame anyone [...] I have to accept these things. I don't have nobody, nothing. Life is life. I'll just have to learn to accept it. I pray and ask God, "Please just get me a job. Then every -thing will be alright.

Jane was thirty years of age and single. She had boyfriends through the years but nothing had lasted. Her latest wanted her to 'have his baby' but Jane was against the idea. He was married so she would have had the sole responsibility for caring for the child. She stated that in her circumstances she could not even look after herself, so to have a baby was impossible. She would have liked to have children, but it was not an option she could consider with any of her previous partners. She said, 'They come and go. I don't see them for a long time, then they come back. I told them you can't have children then disappear off when you want to.' Jane decided that if her life was to improve she should concentrate on educating herself. She had no definite goals, only the conviction that getting an education would ultimately lead to a better life. It had been a struggle and there were years where she took time out to earn money to support herself and put money away for the next year's education programme. In

1996, she gained a teaching Diploma and qualifications in Accountancy, Xhosa and Business Economics.

I asked Jane how Claire had become involved with her education. She explained that when her own mother worked as a domestic Claire had helped towards her educational expenses. However, when Jane had decided to continue into further education she personally had gone to Claire to ask her to help her. She discussed the events that led to her requests for help as follows:

I didn't have a lot of hope. All the money I managed to save whilst I had worked as a shop assistant had gone. I'd nothing now to support me but I wanted to finish. I sit down and talk with Claire. I asked Claire to give me money and after I finished studying I would pay her back. Even with Claire's help it was a bad year. The money she gave me paid for my student rent I had no other money. Food and transport I just managed as best I could. I didn't worry – I was getting my education.

Jane was still extremely grateful to Claire and stated that she loved her and that she was like her mother. If Claire had not helped her, she could not have got her qualifications. It was a 'happy day' in 1996 when she had realised her ambition and got her teaching Diploma. She had decided that she would like to become a teacher as she was studying. Jane felt there was a great need in the country for black children to be educated and that with the ANC taking over the country she was sure she would easily get a job as a teacher.

Three years on despite numerous applications she is still without a job. Jane said 'I feel very very angry, very bitter'. She is now so desperate she would take on any job. She did not regard working for Claire as employment as she was only being given R100 per month because Claire felt sorry for her. Jane did not dislike domestic work but felt she could do 'better'. She would only consider this type of work because she had no other choice. In addition to seeking employment as a teacher, Jane had put in numerous applications to other employers, particularly in the retail sector. At one

time she had been a shop assistant and would take this type of work again if she had to. Her education had not helped her; it had only made things worse. I asked her why she thought this and the following is her reply:

My education is destroying me. When I apply for a job, they **[prospective employers]** look at my qualifications and reject me. They say “You’re a teacher. When you get a job, a teaching job, you’ll leave us. We want someone permanent.” I have to lie and not tell them what I have. It would help if I had family working. If you have a job, you can often tell a family member about a job and help them get it. By the time I see the advert, the job is already been taken. It’s hopeless.

I finally asked Jane if she regretted all her years of study, if it had made her life more difficult. She replied that at least during those years she had felt some hope for the future. She explained that the reason two of her sisters drank all the time was to make life more bearable. Claire was still helping her, and encouraging her to find a ‘proper’ job. Jane was still convinced that ‘the job’, when it came, would radically change her life and give her independence and a home of her own.

6-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

Claire paid Alvera R30 per day plus R12 for her bus fare. Alvera’s monthly salary from Claire when working full-time for her had been R450. Claire did not pay Jane a ‘proper wage’ but provided her with ‘pocket money’. For the two days worked Jane received R200 per month. However, since Jane owed Claire money for her education, she actually only was given R100 per month as the other R100 was kept to offset the debt. In sum, Jane worked one day a week for Claire in lieu of money owing in respect of her education. Neither woman had rigid hours of employment. Claire stated; ‘I don’t believe in set hours. Once the job is finished, they can go. Alvera asked to go home early for her children. I said that was fine as long as the job is done.’ As both the employment arrangements were on a part-time basis paid holidays including bank holidays were not given. The food of the house was readily accessible

to them and Claire would give them 'loans' on their wages from time to time.

Claire described such occasions as follows:

And okay from time to time she'll [Alvera] say she is desperate and can she borrow some money. I'm just about driven mad as she usually asks me a minute before I have to get back to work. But there is never a question of when are you upping my wages. There is an acceptance. I can't pay a living wage [...] I just can't do more. [...] we're having this law come in, then we will have to pay X rand per hour. What will happen is no one will be able to afford it, so that basically means everybody who's a domestic worker won't have a job. People can't afford it [...] it is very very sad. A little bit is better than nothing. There are so many thousands in this country with nothing. [...]

In discussing Jane, Claire stated that she had always been a 'burden' and always needed assistance.

Without examining the per capita income of the white population in the Eastern Cape in detail, it is impossible to validate Claire's assertion that it was the whites' lack of finance that was the main factor in the poor wages offered to domestics. There could be some element of truth in her arguments. I noted from my Johannesburg pilot study that wages there were more than double those paid to the domestics I interviewed in Grahamstown. The very fact that the minimum wage when introduced will vary between regions also adds credence to Claire's assessment. Undoubtedly as the Eastern Cape is one of the poorer regions of South Africa, its minimum wage will be amongst the lowest in the country. It is interesting to note, that Claire could not afford to employ domestic servants whilst she resided in Cape Town. Coloureds rather than blacks predominate in this sector of employment in the Cape, which does raise some further questions of skin colour and payment rates, which would be worth exploring in further research. Having accepted to a certain extent Claire's justification for low wages to their servants I do have significant reservations. Helen's 4-(i) case study for example, illustrated the fact that she, from a relatively

lower income group than other employers, matched their wage rates. Srinivas' (1995) observation that income differential is the decisive factor in the decision to employ servants does strongly suggest that a large motivating factor for employers is not their inability to pay but rather the cheapness of their servants. It could therefore be assumed that because servants are so cheap it is not so much a case of necessity that they are employed but rather that they are convenient, and more easily exploitable. The very fact that Claire had no servants in the Cape does seem to support this contention.

There is another interpretation of income differentials and high employment ratios of domestic servants – altruism. I refer back to a interview I had with a Johannesburg employer, who had employed her domestic servant for the last fifteen years. Ellen had turned up at Christine's doorstep and had asked for work. There was no moral high ground to take as far as Christine was concerned. The choice for Ellen was to become a domestic or nothing. Christine and Claire both used terms such as 'responsibility', and in my opinion, were both sincere in their altruism, that is, genuinely concerned to help the women they employed.

I repeat the comments I wrote after this meeting,

Refusal to employ a domestic because of objections of; this woman should be with her family, the wages I can afford are low because of my own circumstance, this is a demeaning form of work are meaningless. To be able to condemn there has to be an alternative offered. Domestic labour for black women in South African is employment at the margins, that is, amongst the poorest paid and longest hours but what can be offered to these women instead? Two things are required for these types of women, opportunities of education and avenues of employment. There has to be a two-pronged strategy to aid them. Improved education has to be linked to employment. The apartheid experience has entailed significant numbers of black women being 'trained' for menial positions in the workforce. However, qualifications are futile if there is not the positions available in the job market. Conversely, an employer cannot offer skilled work to an employee who is unskilled without some incentive. Training

is a possibility for the employer to provide but who meets the costs?
 There is evidence of a legal framework to offer more protection to domestic workers being set in place, for instance, the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, but without improved education and employment opportunities these women are still extremely vulnerable and marginalised.

Having defended employers such as Christine and Claire I do not wish to imply that exploitation of their servants does not happen. Rather I would suggest that the domestic service relationship is a paradoxical one where exploitation and altruism are inextricably linked together. For example referring back to Christine, the suits she wore for work cost about half Ellen's monthly wages. Christine was so conscious of the difference that she cut the prices off her purchases before bringing them home so Ellen would not see them. Claire, like all the employers I interviewed in Grahamstown, was conveniently ignoring the ratio of hours worked to pay. I accept they may have been unable to increase payment to their servants, but they were clearly able to reduce the number of hours worked. In reducing hours this would demonstrate altruism and at the same time diminish the exploitation of their servants.

The education paid for Jane also has its mixed elements. For example, Jane's 'payments' back to Claire indicates that some of the money given for her education was loaned rather than given. In addition, Claire's involvement was to a certain extent thrust on her by Jane's need rather than her own personal choice. All of which was underpinned by a sense of regret, for instance, Claire's questioning of commencing the education process for Jane because of the 'responsibility' that it brought with it. The relationship between Claire and Jane had resemblance to that of Mabel Palmer and Lily Moya as outlined by Marks (1987: 161-162) in her work *Neither an Experimental Doll*. Lily was a Xhosa school girl whose education was

funded by Mabel. Her letters indicate similar sentiments to those expressed by Claire. Writing to friend Violet 6. 6. 1951 she states:

[,,] Lily is really beginning to be rather too much for me. I am sorry now I ever gave her any help or encouragement at all.

To Lily 7. 6. 1951

You are a little nuisance [...]

[...] every time you press on me a desire for a more intimate relationship you force me back [...] any close or intimate friendship between us is really not possible and you will only spoil things if you grasp at it.

Jane had become for a time a 'daughter of the house' whilst Claire had resided in Cape Town, but although she would have liked that relationship to continue it had not materialised on a permanent basis. Claire described Jane as like a daughter but the relationship was once more back in the employment parameters set by her. The employment relationship permeated and negated the professed familial terms between them.

Both Lily and Jane suffered from depression. Lily suffered a nervous breakdown and was to spend many years of her adult life in a mental institution. Claire's explanation of Jane's depression was that it was centred in the after effects of bereavement and food allergies. However, Jane's bitterness and distress at her circumstances could only have worsened her depressive condition. Educating these women had unintended consequences for their benefactresses. Instead of continuing to accept what was given, both began to have increased expectations and started to make their own demands. Becoming educated had changed them but in terms of their respective relationships to Mabel and Claire, this did not similarly evolve with their metamorphosis. Shaw, through the words of Eliza in his play *Pygmalion* makes a similar point:

What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to become of me? [...] You see really and truly [...] the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated (Shaw, 1966: 76, 93).

Perhaps this could be rephrased for Jane as follows; 'I'm fit to be a teacher but I'm treated like a domestic. I live in squalor in the townships and I can do nothing to change this. I have ultimately become fit for nothing'. Adding my 'chains of otherness' conception, 'I thought to become like you by my education, but although I reject my positioning as the other, I am trapped in the role because the chains refused to break'. Her dire personal straits had resulted in her dependency becoming acute. Jane therefore had no choice but to continue in the position of 'other', the child to Claire's role as mother. For it was, only through maintaining her role as a 'demanding' child that Jane could obtain some degree of succour and support from Claire.

Concluding remarks:

Power inequality is an integral part of any employment relationship. Each of these three employers, particularly Katrina 5-(i), stated that familial relationships or friendship took precedence over employment status. Implicit in this line of reasoning is that the employee is not subordinate but elevated to family or friendship inclusion. These sentiments, no matter how heartfelt, do not, and cannot, redress the power imbalance between the women. It is the employer alone who dictates the terms of the relationship, whether the domestic worker is to be a confidante or a cleaner. The relationship is also a dynamic one and the vulnerability of the domestic exacerbates the power differential. A family member can expect constant financial, emotional and social support. Two points need to be made in respect of the domestic. Firstly, she is primarily obtaining financial support from her employer, however inadequate this might be. If she obtains any emotional or social support this at best can only be an

added bonus. With so many dependants reliant on her, irrespective of her working conditions she has to work. At this level of poverty, the quality of the work experience has to be a low priority. Secondly, her position is precarious, and professions of friendship do not guarantee employment within the home. Economic imperatives will ultimately take priority, as in the final analysis the domestic worker position as an employee will take precedence over that of friend. For example, Katrina's conditions of employment for Zenith 5-(ii) were exemplary. Yet, with her proposed move out of the area the relationship was to be severed. The most Katrina could do for her servant was to find an alternative employer for her. If she was successful in this, the terms and conditions of Zenith's new domestic service relationship were totally outside her control. Almost certainly, Zenith would accept them even if they were exploitative because of her lack of alternatives. We can conclude for the domestic worker that her terms and conditions of employment are like a lottery, in that she is reliant on chance rather than choice in her employer.

Labour legislation has the remit to standardise pay and conditions in this sector of employment. The highly individualistic nature of the domestic service relationship strongly suggests that implementation and enforcement of the statutes are not viable. The determining factor will continue to be the 'good will' of each employer in the relationship. Each of these three employers had complete autonomy in determining the nature of the relationship with their servants. The respective class and philosophies of the employers did not affect their power and ability to dictate the framework of the domestic service relationship. Equally, Jane the educated maid 6 – (ii), was impotent to alter the nature of her relationship with her employer. Her education was achieved through her employer's generosity and the inevitable outcome of this was her being ill equipped to make demands of her employer. Her

employment status suffocated her desire to be treated as a 'daughter' by Claire. If the checks and balances to the employer are not to be found in labour legislation or the relationship between the women where are they to be found? The answer must be in the wider societal forces. Bujra's (2000) observation that Tanzanian servants' peak of prestige had been when they were in high demand during the colonial period is of relevance. The limited supply of servants enhanced their value in the market place. Therefore a reduction in unemployment, the increased education of marginalised groups and the creation of alternative employment opportunities would curtail the power of employers.

These blocks to employers are not only applicable to South African domestic service but will have universal relevance. All employers' power will be curtailed by these factors. Srinivas' (1995) detailing of the patterning of domestic servants in the global markets supports the point. The countries with the highest density of domestic servants are those where pools of unskilled labour are readily available and income differentials are maximised. Perhaps the way forward for the improvement of the pay and conditions in this sector of employment is not to focus on increased labour legislation but rather to address the underlying causes of so many women situating themselves in domestic service. By choice, all of the domestic workers I interviewed would have chosen an alternative occupation. This was also true in Cock's study, with many of her interviewees were only working as domestics because they had no other options. Indeed, to repeat the earlier point, the domestic workers then and now were all keen to educate their children so they could have a 'better' job than theirs'. Higher educational achievements for marginalised groups such as domestic workers would seem to be an initial starting and target area. This would increase their

marketable skills and enable them to be more discerning of exploitative practices by their employers.

Jane's case study is indicative that education alone cannot be the panacea to improve the lives of these types of women. If there are not the employment opportunities to absorb those with increased knowledge and skills, their perseverance to educate themselves will seem a fruitless exercise. Of all the interviews I had with domestic workers, the pathos of Jane was the most intense. There were domestic workers who shed tears when I interviewed them but their pain was centred in their dire circumstances. With Jane, she had the additional burden of not only her poverty but also the knowledge that she had the abilities to be more than she had become. 'She said 'I'm trained to be a teacher, so why am I a domestic?' I was mindful of Ward's introductory comments to Shaw's (1966) famous play *Pygmalion* when he remarks, 'To educate is to give (or at least to offer) new life to those who receive the education, and that new life produces discontent with existing circumstances and creates the desire for a different kind of world.' Education to make a difference must be part of a comprehensive economic strategy that will 'change the world' of these women. To refer again to the discussions of the Political Economy chapter, in addition to educational initiatives, South Africa needs to continue to pursue social improvement policies, job creation and some degree of income redistribution. Having committed itself to economic growth as the means to ameliorate its social problems it will take South Africa time to significantly make a difference to the lives of Jane and the other domestic workers I interviewed.

CHAPTER 6: NON-WHITE EMPLOYERS AND SERVANTS

If the Economist's (2001) article is right, that Mbeki has an agenda to promote the growth of a black middle class, then South Africa's class structure, if he is successful in his aim, will experience a significant colour shift. The outcome for the domestic service sector could be that increasing numbers of employers are non-white rather than white. In both Bujra's (2000) Tanzanian and Hansen's (1989) Zambian studies, as independence replaced colonialism, class location rather than race became the major factor in determining the terms of the domestic service relationship. For example, to repeat an earlier point, Bujra's emphasis on class analysis is reflected in the title of her book *Serving Class*. The title is an affirmation of her conviction that in the Tanzanian context, the class relationship has become central in circumscribing the terms of the domestic service contracts. Implicit in the remit of my research is the suggestion that the removal of racial prejudices could lead to an improvement in the lives of black domestic workers. However, as Bujra's and Hansen's studies have indicated, the class dynamic could gain ascendancy as racial practices diminish, which in turn could lead to limitations in the improvements for domestic workers. The introduction of non-white employers into my study facilitates the exploration of the class relationship between employers and servants. This is a major departure from Cock (1989/1979), as her study focused exclusively on white employers and their servants. An important point to note is the fact that non-white employers did employ domestic workers during apartheid. If Cock had incorporated them into her fieldwork, their inclusion could have provided her with a site to validate or challenge her central assertion that the domestic service context was to be understood mainly as a 'microcosm' of apartheid.

These three case studies, to a certain extent, are the vehicle to re-evaluated the assumption that the removal of racially driven practices will lead to improvements in the lives of domestic servants. Similarities to my other case studies, would be a confirmation that class difference was manifesting itself in a parallel pattern to those of race in the domestic service context. This would indicate that income differentials, which have been exacerbated by racial inequalities, are the crucible for determining the terms and conditions in this sector of employment. The wider agenda to improve the lives of black domestic workers would have to incorporate some degree of income redistribution. (This point implicitly is asserting the necessity of the implementation of the minimum wage.) Finally, if the social practices were replicated within domestic service, when the class variable replaces that of race, this would be an indicator of the fact that they have the capability of perpetuating through different political and social contexts.

The employers in the final three case studies were Asian, coloured and Xhosa¹⁰. All of the maids were Xhosa and conformed to the prevailing pattern of servants I interviewed, in that they were the main financial providers for their families and were also poorly educated. Each had been a domestic worker for all of their adult lives. In case studies (7) and (8), the domestic service relationship had been of long duration and the workers had been with the same employer during and after apartheid. In case study (9), the relationship was a relatively new one, e.g. two years, and the previous employer had been a white madam. Of all the homes I visited those of the Asian and Xhosa employers were both the largest and most luxurious. Although specific income details were not divulged both women described themselves as 'living a wealthy' life-

¹⁰ The order of the case studies is reflective of the hierarchy of colour designation set out under the apartheid regime. Consequently, a degree of racial division has to be acknowledged in the Asian and coloured case studies. However, all three employers expressed their aversion to racial prejudices because of their own experiences during apartheid.

style. The coloured employer was a professional woman, as was her husband and she too could be described as affluent. The class location of all three women appeared to be situated within the middle class. However, it cannot be forgotten that racial differences have significantly affected class positioning (See Genovese, 1971, Williams, 1997). These employers still felt that they were viewed as 'inferior' by their white counterparts, although this was not as severe as during apartheid. Furthermore, all stated that having been the recipients of racial prejudices that they had actively sought to 'treat' their employees in a fair and a just manner.

Case Study 7: Asian employer and Xhosa maid.

7-(i) Employer's profile: - Theresa.

I was early for my appointment to interview Theresa and her maid Martha invited me inside to wait for 'Madam'. Martha was not surprised to see me, as Theresa had informed her of my intended visit and that she was to 'look after me until she got there'. As we waited, Martha asked me if I would like to look around the home. I replied that I would like to and would it be all right to do so. Her response was as follows, 'Oh yes. It has nine rooms. I look after them all. It has four bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room. Oh yes, there's a study, and another room for the children.' (As I felt it was intrusive to wander around the house without Theresa's explicit permission, I curtailed the viewing to the general living areas of the family). Martha took great pride and delight in the home and informed me that she liked to 'dust' and 'take care of everything'. The home was exquisite in its palatial splendour. The gardens were extensive, with ornamental bridges and walkways criss-crossing the lawns. On Theresa's return she informed me that, as property was an important issue for the Indian community, they had chosen a 'virgin' territory to build their homes. During apartheid, with the whites-only rule in force within the

parameters of Grahamstown, the Asian population had made 'their own place'.

Theresa explained that living together ensured that their cultural heritage was maintained and that as Asians they could assist one another during difficult times.

Theresa further stated that her own 'cultural identity' was not centred on religion. Although her husband was a practising Hindu, her parents had been converted to Catholicism and she too had accepted Christianity. Together as a couple they had decided that their two young sons would be taught the doctrines of both their respective faiths and they could then make independent choices when they 'were old enough' to do so. Theresa was thirty-six years of age and had no paid employment outside the home. Her husband was a successful businessman and there was no need for her to earn extra income for the family. Martha had been employed as a domestic in the home for the last ten years. I asked Theresa what were her reasons for employing her. The following was her response:

She's like a mother to the children when I'm not around. I need her. I also feel if I were to do all the work that she does and see to the kids, I wouldn't have any time. There are afternoons where I have to go to meetings and things. I feel at ease knowing that she is here with them [children].

It had not been difficult for Theresa to 'find' Martha, she knew her and asked her if she would come and work for her. Theresa also believed that obtaining servants was still relatively easy. Numerous black women would come and work as domestic servants and accept any wage that was offered. It was Theresa's opinion that it was the black community of Grahamstown who had 'suffered' the most under apartheid and consequently they would be the last group to reap the benefits of its demise.

Theresa openly acknowledged the social distance between herself and her maid. She asserted that the Indian race had been the 'privileged lot of apartheid' and as such had

found avenues within the system to 'better themselves'. However, Theresa felt that she and Martha had been unified by their common experiences of racial prejudices. She clarified her point with the following:

Looking back since apartheid has gone, nothing has changed. The Boers may have been removed but that is about it. I still feel that antagonism between black and white. To be classed as black is anyone who isn't fair-skinned. To be black is to feel inferior. Maybe this is because we don't have a high social standing within the community.

As they both had experienced the effects of apartheid, Theresa had determined through the years, that Martha should not experience any such prejudices from her in their relationship. Therefore, Theresa felt confident to claim that she had not abused her position as Martha's employer. She wanted to describe Martha as being like a family member. 'I love her like a sister but it is wrong for me to describe her as such.' I asked her why she could not use such terminology. The response was that after reading an article entitled, 'If she is part of your family, where are her children and where is her husband?' this made her question the validity of describing her feelings towards Martha in a familial manner. She made the following observation:

It [article] made me think. If she is part of my family where are her children and where is her husband? Do we celebrate their festivities and things like that? Yes, she's part of the family to me, but I can't say that after what I've read. She's a very close friend.

However, Theresa did not intend to seek out Martha's family in order to validate her intimacy with Martha by 'getting to know' them. The effect of the article had made her more discerning in defining the terms of her relationship with Martha. In summary, the reading of the article had been thought provoking rather than an impetus to change the nature of her interactions with her servant.

Theresa could not envisage herself socially interacting with Martha's family but did not specify why she felt this way. However, I did note that Theresa was greatly concerned that a number of black people were erecting 'sub-standard' housing across the road from her property. Theresa was convinced that this was the outcome of a 'conspiracy' to undermine the Asian community. Theresa believed that the Local Authorities had sanctioned the black encroachment on this Asian territory to devalue the price of their houses. Theresa was extremely critical of how the blacks were building their homes and compared their inadequate capabilities to that of the Asians. As she pointed out the black houses, she emphasised that it was 'the poverty' of the homes that had resulted in the plummeting market prices of all the Asian properties. She felt extremely angry that she, and the rest of the Asian community, had lost thousands of rand through the devaluation. Theresa was unequivocal in her view that the blacks should have kept away from 'their place' and made or kept to their own locations. Clearly, Theresa's main concern was the protection of her property, but in safeguarding her 'space', the outcome was a shunning of the intermingling of the races. Theresa's territorial preoccupations would seriously hinder social discourse between herself and Martha outside their domestic service relationship. Although not stated, knowing the fact that Martha's home was also reflective of poverty, would Theresa have welcomed Martha living in a closer proximity than the hour's distance that she lived now? The answer would most probably be that of 'No'. If this is the case then this desired physical distance in the proximity of their respective homes might signal the true nature of the social distance between them.

7-(ii) Servant's profile: - Martha

Martha was ashamed of her home, but could not see how she could find anything better for her family. Her husband had been 'crippled' in an industrial accident as a

young man and was unfit for any type of work. She was illiterate, because as a child she had been brought up on a farm and never had the opportunity to go to school. Martha believed that her illiteracy had stopped her getting any other form of work, which also meant that she would never be able to earn 'a lot of money'. Her eldest son at twenty-five was old enough to have a job but did not have one. (Whether her son was working in the informal economy or was involved in illegal activities can only be conjecture, I presumed that this was the case, as Martha was not prepared to discuss her son, or his activities, in any detail). Therefore, according to Martha, because of her limited financial resources, there was 'no hope' of her family obtaining a 'proper' house. The present accommodation consisted of a living room and three additional rooms, which acted as bedrooms. The house did not have electricity or inside water. There were 'no rules' so you could build a house where you wanted to, and this is how she had acquired her house. The family with the help of friends had built the house together. 'It was better than having nothing'. The money that Martha earned as a domestic was supplemented by her husband's small pension. Life was hard but they survived. Martha's three other children were all still at school and she was pleased that they were 'getting' an education and hoped they would have the opportunities denied to her. Martha was forty-seven years of age and had spent the last thirty years of her life working as a domestic. The passing of apartheid had not changed her life much but she was more hopeful for her children. She was encouraging them to stay at school so that they would not have to lead the type of life that had been hers. Her one regret was that she had never learnt to read and write, and now had to rely on her children to do this for her. I asked her if she would like to learn, but she felt she did not have the time to do so.

Although Martha believed that for women like herself life had not really changed, she was sure that for others the gap between them and the whites was closing. For example, her 'Madam' was able to lead a 'good life'. Her own personal future was something that she worried about, particularly now she was growing older. 'Life is hard now, but it could be a lot worse. I know women sitting in the location with no jobs'. I asked her why she did not ask her employer for a pension as she had worked for her for a long time. All she would respond was 'No pension' and would not answer the question directly. She had not discussed her worries with Theresa and just hoped she could stay with her for a long time and that Theresa would continue to look after her. Martha had no comprehension of what a contract of employment was or that there were labour laws in place that would help her. Her 'Madam' was a kind woman who was just like her 'Mother'. Every day she was grateful to have her job and she enjoyed her work 'very much'. I asked her what the work was that she did in the home. Her reply was 'everything'. The best part of her duties was looking after the children and there was no aspect of her work that she did not like to do.

I asked Martha, as I had asked all the other domestic servants I had interviewed, what other job would she have liked to have done. Her response was reflective of theirs, in that this was something she had never considered. She stated, 'There is no chance for us. You do what you can.' She had started her first job as a domestic when she was sixteen years of age and through the years, she has had good and bad employers. The employers had not been her biggest concern, but rather being able to find full-time work. Sometimes she had only found casual employment and had not been sure of the money she was going to earn that week. At least with a regular employer you knew your money would be paid. Martha believed that most domestic workers would 'put up' with any employer because they needed to find money for their families.

Martha had known Theresa and can remember being 'very happy' when she had asked her to come and work for her. Martha was also extremely relieved, as she had felt that 'this time' this would be a long-term position. She had been proved right in that she had now worked in her job for ten years and 'knew' that she would have her job for many more. The added bonus was that this employer was not white.

Martha's experience of working for white women had not been pleasant. It is important to remember that the period Martha is referring to was pre-1989 when apartheid was still in force. She hoped that she would never have to work for a white woman again as she felt that many of them treated black people like they were 'nothing'. She reminisced about her last white employer:

She treated me like dirt. She worked me like a dog and paid me nothing. I worked six days a week for R24. She paid me that for a whole week. I wasted my time. I'll stay in my house for that. She wanted me to do this, do that, nothing ever pleased her. I just left and never came back. I had two or three part-time jobs after that. It wasn't much but it was better than that.

This still made Martha angry when she remembered how badly she was treated and paid. She was not able to eat the food in the house and she felt she had been watched all the time in case she took 'anything'. In Theresa's house, all the food was there for her to have if she wanted it. Many times Theresa would send food home with her for her family. Martha felt totally trusted by her 'Madam' and had been often left in charge of the house when Theresa was out. She felt Theresa really cared for her and as such, she now had self-respect. Martha's final comment was that she loved her employer and she was 'so lucky' to be able to work for her. Her family needed her to work so she would 'do' any job she had to even if her employer was a 'bad' one. Thankfully Theresa was not like that and so Martha could enjoy her work as well as bring money home for the family.

As with the majority of the other domestic workers that I interviewed Martha had expressed no bitterness at her circumstances and seemed to accept total responsibility for bettering them if she could. The ‘burden’ of providing for her husband was something that she had taken. Like Rebecca 2-(ii), she had not considered seeking legal redress for her husband’s industrial injury. His crippling at work meant that this was something else she had to take responsibility for. Her marginalised position was reflective in her total isolation from any form of support, other than what she could achieve for herself through working as a domestic servant. Martha was resigned to her living arrangement because she had not the means to rectify it. She had not considered that state intervention might be a means to help her. Wages were something that were given at the discretion of the employer rather than an earned right. Labour legislation was beyond her comprehension and so contracts and pension provision were not incorporated into her life plans. Her solution to her problems was to keep working with the hope that her health stayed good to maximise her working years. Martha’s only support was the ‘kindness’ of her employer which she perceives as given rather than deserved. Implicitly she was conditioned to expect the minimum from the domestic service relationship, and therefore any more was unexpected and her gratitude was intensified. Martha, and many like her, was susceptible to her employer’s exploitative practices, and it was only through Theresa’s self imposed restraint that such practices were curtailed.

7-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

Martha worked from 8.30am–5.30pm Monday to Friday. Her monthly wages were R300 per month. There was no pension provision and she was given two-weeks paid holiday a year. Martha walked to and from work, irrespective of the weather. Martha felt that it ‘was too far’ to walk but she needed to save the money. She was not sure

of the distance but it took her an hour each way. Taking into account her walking time her working week was fifty-five hours. Martha described the benefits in kind as follows, 'She is very nice to me. She is like my mother 'cos she gives me everything. Presents, things, she buys for me from town. Very, very nice here.' Items that were given to Martha included food parcels and cast-off clothing. Martha particularly liked having discarded dresses, as she could never afford to buy her own. Martha found it difficult 'to manage' on her wages but would not discuss this with her employer. Any increase in the rate would be Theresa's decision alone. Fortunately, her husband's small disability pension supplemented their income. As none of her children were working, her income was the main source of finance for the family. Retirement was not an option, as without pension provision she had no choice but to continue working.

This domestic service relationship had many similarities to its white counterparts. Wages were low and determined on an ad hoc basis, but Martha, as in all other cases, would not challenge the employer for an increase. Indeed, Martha in line with other domestic workers believed her employer was not exploiting her because of the close personal relationship that they shared. This is particularly noteworthy in this case, because the differences in their respective standards of living were immense. It could be assumed that Theresa's obvious wealth would raise questions in Martha's mind why she was paid so little. Martha's comments, as cited above, in describing what she was given denote the opposite to the expected response. In perceiving the benefits in kind as 'presents' she had accepted that she had not earned them as part of her wages but rather they were outside the employment contract. This example substantiates the points I made in respect of Katrina's and Zenith's relationship 5-(iii) about the outcomes of benefits in kind. The employer is at liberty to give or withdraw

them at any time, which maximises her control in the relationship and obscures the reality to the servant of her inadequate wages. The dependency of the domestic worker is inevitably increased and her gratitude intensifies her vulnerability and acquiescence to the demands of her employer.

Like the other domestic service relationships, this one was also imbued with 'pseudo-maternalistic' ideology. Theresa was considerably younger than her maid, but was cast in the role of 'mother'. Interestingly, Theresa was beginning to question the nature of her relationship after reading the article that raised some of the pertinent issues. However, irrespective of her heightened awareness of the incongruities in the relationship, it had not altered. The article had promoted in Theresa's mind the reality of the inconsistencies within the intimacy of the relationship. For example, her involvement in the lives of Martha's family was non-existent but Martha was the second mother to her children. Martha was part of her family, but Theresa was not part of Martha's. In summary, Theresa had realised that there was an inherent imbalance in the domestic service relationship. The servant was an employee in that she was there to do a job of work, and her outside life was left outside the door, but she was also a family member in that she assumed intimate roles, as the employer required her to. From my interviews with domestic workers, I observed them in the following roles: friend, sister, child, confidante, substitute mother for the children, and security for the home when the employer was absent. The employer needed her servant to liberate time for herself, so that she could achieve all that she desired to do. Theresa's acknowledgement had not resulted in her acting to change the terms and conditions of the relationship because she had only seen the symptoms not the root causes of the social practices within the domestic service context.

The root causes were situated in the wider entrapping social forces, which manifested themselves in Theresa's own actions and decisions. In following the normal practice of paying low wages and supplementing them with benefits in kind, this had intensified Martha's dependence on her. It was impossible for Martha to bridge the social distance between herself and employer because of the precariousness of her situation. Any challenge or attempt to renegotiate the terms of the contract could result in loss of the position and consequently destitution. The close personal relationship was no guarantee of secure tenure in the job, rather the onus was on Martha to use her 'personhood' to ensure that the bonding was maintained. The significant point is not the likelihood of Theresa terminating the contract if pressured, but the fact that she had the power to sever it if she so desired. All of which encourages and promotes 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices. This familial ideology cannot be addressed simply by a change in attitude of the employer. As discussed elsewhere, the servant also can be seen to have colluded in the perpetuation of the terms of the relationship because of her desperate circumstances. Theresa's acknowledgement, if it was to make a difference in her relationship with Martha, had to be translated into concrete actions. (The following suggested recommendations to address 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices are not only pertinent to this domestic service relationship but are applicable for all the other case studies discussed so far.) Firstly, the wages Theresa paid to Martha needed to be dramatically increased so that some degree of choice could be offered to Martha in the decisions of what she purchased. For example, benefits in kind, which are determined by the employer, are not so crucial to the employee as she now has some disposable income to decide what she needs for herself. Secondly, the terms of the employment contract need to be formalised with the inclusion of pension provision and the incorporation of incremental pay increases. Finally, moving beyond Theresa's personal actions, the

state needs to provide education, training and job creation for women such as Martha. These basic suggestions are the beginning of the empowerment of the domestic worker. The concept of empowerment as a means to combat 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices will be considered in more detail in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Theresa claimed 'sisterhood' with Martha because both of them had been victims of the racial practices of apartheid. A simple but important point was that Martha was not on first name terms with her employer, although she had worked for her for ten years. Like all the other domestic workers in the study, she addressed her employer as 'Madam'. The paradoxical implications of notions such as 'Madam is my friend, Madam is my sister, have already been raised (see Katrina's and Zenith's relationship 5-(iii)). However, there is a further ramification to be considered. The term has become common usage in South Africa and as such, it could be argued that the participants in the relationship have become desensitised to its 'meaning' and implications. However, this is the crux of the matter. In the Literature Review, I asserted that the social practices of domestic service predate apartheid as they were instigated in the slavery and colonial periods. As part of the colonial legacy, they have become assimilated into the social fabric of the South African society. The term is now so 'normalised' that its symbolic messages have been overlooked, but this does not mean that they are gone. The messages conveyed by the servant addressing her employer as 'Madam' are deference, respect, subservience and a vocal affirmation of her social distance to her employer. Theresa, and the other employers, will symbolically start to close the social gulf between themselves and their employees when they invite them to use their given name rather than the formal title of 'Madam'.

However to do this they themselves will first have to recognise the full implications of the terminology.

Case Study 8: Coloured employer and Xhosa maid.

8-(i) Employer's profile: - Sophie

Of all the employers I interviewed Sophie was the most cautious and suspicious of my motives. Her opening words were quite revealing:

Why do you want to talk to me? What do you want to know for?
Will what I tell you get me into trouble?

What do you mean get you into trouble?

Will the Authorities use this information against me? I will talk to you but I may not answer all your questions. I'll decide what to tell you. Some things are private and shouldn't be said. You can't talk to my maid – she wouldn't want to talk to you. She only speaks Xhosa and you would frighten her because she doesn't like white women.

I informed Sophie that if she was uncomfortable speaking to me that I would not proceed with the interview and would leave. She insisted that I stayed but she would rather I spoke to her at her office rather than in her home. She was happy for the tape recorder to be switched on as she was monitoring all the questions and would decide whether to answer or not. The only question she refused to answer was the wages that she paid to her domestic. My Xhosa interpreter contacted Esther, Sophie's maid, who invited me to her home in the township. Furthermore, my interpreter stated that Esther was anxious to speak to me as she wanted me to know what her life was like, particularly how it was working for Sophie. Esther was comfortable in my presence and spoke at length with me via the interpreter. She provided all the details of her wages and the terms and conditions of her employment contract. As I never gained access to Sophie's home, Esther described it to me.

In Esther's words, Sophie's house was a 'nice house' in the 'coloured quarters'. It was detached and had a living room, dining room, bathroom, kitchen and three bedrooms. 'She has many nice things in her house. They have lots of money to spend.' Sophie was a dental assistant and her husband was a doctor. Life was getting better for them as her husband had far more 'opportunities' now apartheid had gone. He was coloured also and life had been difficult during apartheid. Sophie was thirty-six years of age and had three daughters all under the age of ten. As her job was full-time she needed a domestic to 'see to the children' and the housework. Her husband was also very busy so he could not help out much around the home. She laughingly remarked that he had to do more at the weekends though, when Esther wasn't there. Esther 'saw to everything' during the week so Sophie could concentrate on her job. It had been difficult achieving an education and obtaining a 'proper job'. Although coloureds had not been discriminated to the same extent as black people during apartheid, it still had been a significant obstacle to overcome. Her parents had been educated, her mother for instance was a retired teacher, and had wanted the same for their children.

Sophie had employed Esther for the last nine years and expected the employment relationship to carry on for 'many more years'. She described her relationship with Esther as a 'relaxed one' and that Esther was like her 'older sister' for whom she had a deep affection and love. Having experienced apartheid she had always ensured that its practices 'were kept outside' the home. She became very animated when explaining what apartheid had been like.

You whites have no idea what it was like. No idea at all. When you're coloured you've got white and black blood, so what are you? That's **[apartheid]** no longer here. It's wrong. We don't treat our servants like the whites because we know what it is like to be treated badly.

Sophie went on to explain again that Esther would be uncomfortable speaking to me because of what I represented to her. 'You are white, and white people have used the blacks very badly. It will take them a long time to forget the injustices that they had to face.' It was her opinion that Esther would rather not work within the white community and preferred to work for a coloured or black employer because of their 'better treatment'. Sophie was happy with her maid and would not change her. However, because unemployment was so high within the black population she had no fears of finding a new one if Esther left for any reason. Sophie believed that many black women were desperate for any kind of work and would willingly come and work as a domestic.

The quality Sophie most admired in Esther was her reliability. As a 'professional woman' she had to ensure that her own work commitments were not interfered with by domestic problems. If the children were sick or there was a 'small domestic crisis' Esther would resolve it. Esther's worst fault was that if she broke anything she would try to hide any evidence of the breakage. Sophie remarked that this made her extremely cross, not because of the accident but because of the lying and deceit.

She is like a naughty child who is guilty and tries to pretend it wasn't her. When I find out I confront her and she then has to tell me that she has done it. I keep telling her to tell me when she breaks things. I don't mind. There is no problem. I don't charge her for the breakage so I can't understand why she needs to lie. It is dishonesty and I won't tolerate it.

This was the only major problem within the relationship. Sophie did not instruct Esther in the home but rather just left Esther to decide for herself what needed to be done. The quality of her work was to a high standard and the children were all extremely close to her. Sophie had complete confidence in Esther's capabilities and dependability in managing her home in her absence. Therefore, Sophie's accusation

of Esther's 'childlike' behaviour has to be considered against the fact that she totally delegated responsibility for the management of her home onto Esther. Clearly, a childlike person would not have been able to assume such autonomy in work task organisation and execution. The reasons for Esther to lie most probably had a different motivation other than a manifestation of childishness. Esther's interview shed considerable light on why she would seek to hide any accidental breakages in Sophie's home. Her childlike action in hiding her misdemeanour was most probably the result of her adult awareness of the extreme displeasure she would invoke by her inadvertent clumsiness.

8-(ii) Servant's profile: - Esther

Esther's home was similar to all the other homes of domestic servants that I visited. It consisted of four rooms, a living room with a stove in the corner and the three other rooms serving as bedrooms. It had electricity but water was obtained from an outside tap in the yard. Sanitation consisted of an outside toilet, which was also located in the yard. Esther informed me that 'things had been worse', as before the street used to share one water tap which was situated at the end of the road. At least now there was not a great distance to go to get water (see Appendix 2). The house was scrupulously clean and Esther explained that although she did not have much she took care of it. Her stove was always being used to boil pans of water in order that she could clean and maintain her house. Like the other domestic workers, she wished she could have a bathroom but felt this was impossible for her without outside assistance. She paid R200 a month for rent, but had never heard of any plans for putting inside water into the properties. There were many houses in the township with bathrooms, but the women who lived there were usually married and were not domestic workers. She had heard stories concerning a couple of retired domestic workers whose former

employers had paid to have 'nice' homes built for them in the township.

Although she had worked as a domestic from the age of seventeen, none of her employers had incorporated pension provision into the employment arrangement. Esther did not trust Sophie and felt she was capable of 'just getting rid' of her when she was of no further use. There certainly would not be a home provided as a retirement gift. Esther was not trying to think about getting older, because this as yet was many years away. Her priority was to keep working and provide for her two daughters.

Esther was forty-five years old and her two daughters were twenty-eight and two years of age. Esther was proud of her eldest daughter who could read and write well and had stayed on at school. She had enough qualifications to attend a college or university but because of the families strained finances she decided to look for employment. She has had jobs but in the last 'few years' has been unable to 'find anything' and now lives back home with Esther. Since the relatively recent birth of her younger sister she minds her whilst Esther goes to work. I asked Esther why her daughter did not find work as a domestic and she stayed at home with her little girl. Esther explained that it was easier for herself to get work as a domestic, as many madams preferred older women to work for them. She also felt that her older daughter would not be able to tolerate the way that some employers treated their servants. Particularly she had no desire for her daughter to work for Sophie. This probably would have been possible. For example, in her own case she had taken over the position from her sister. Esther's older sister Rose had worked for Sophie and when she had become too sick Esther took over the job for her. Esther was certain that Sophie would agree to this arrangement again, and therefore her daughter could

take her place. However, it would upset her greatly to think of her daughter suffering the same things that she has had to endure through the years.

I asked Esther why she had such objections to her daughter working for Sophie.

Below is her response:

She shouts most of the time. Before Mandela came out she was much worse. She frightens me. She checks all the time what you are doing. I have to stand all day. I never can sit down. When I'm folding the clothes I want to sit down to have a rest while I do it. I'm told I don't need to sit down for that. I'm lucky if I get ten minutes to eat my lunch. The only time it gets worse is when her mother comes to stay. She's just as bad. You have two of them shouting.

Esther would have left if she could, as every day was difficult. As it is, the last nine years of working for Sophie have been like 'hell'. (At this point Esther burst into tears). The thought of having another nine years of the same treatment was something Esther would rather not think or talk about. She described her feelings towards Sophie as follows: 'I tolerate her because I have to.' Esther through the years has quietly made enquiries about finding an alternative employer. She said that although she had tried, 'It's hopeless'. I asked her what type of work she had looked for. The response was only as a domestic as she had never 'done' any other kind of work and this was all she knew. She had wanted to stay on at school but had to leave. Esther could read and write well and wanted to train to become a nurse. She was only a young teenager when her mother got sick and she had to stay home to care for her and look after her younger brothers and sisters. By the time she could seek work at seventeen years of age, the only job she could find had been that of a domestic worker.

Sophie angered Esther many times. Esther believed that she was a ‘very lazy woman’ who only employed her so that ‘she could do nothing so Esther ‘could do everything’. She spoke of why she felt Sophie was such a bad employer:

I ask to come to work later so I can see to my daughter before I come. She says “No”. She needs me here. She needs me to get her children dressed because she’s too lazy to do it her self. Who gets my daughter dressed? She doesn’t care. It’s the same after school. I have to feed them, read to them get them ready. I love them. They are the best part of my job. All the time I’m thinking I’ll see my daughter for an hour. One hour a day until the weekends because she is lazy.

Esther was both angry and sad that her oldest daughter had the responsibility of raising her younger sibling. (Esther’s marriage had failed many years ago and the father of her youngest child was a ‘passing boyfriend’ who had lost contact.) Esther felt that her eldest was living a similar life to how hers had been, and her youngest hardly knew her. However, they had to have some money if they were to survive. It was a great strain as when Sophie was shouting Esther had on many occasions wanted to shout back. Instead, Esther stated that she had said nothing and got on with what she was told to do. If she could ever find a new employer, it would be a ‘good day’ in that she would be able to say a final goodbye to Sophie and never have to see her again.

8-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

In comparison to other employers, Sophie paid relatively higher wages. Esther’s wages were R600 per month with three weeks paid holiday. Her hours were from 8.00am–5.00pm and she worked Monday to Friday. Esther could eat the food that was in the house, but there were never any extras to take home. Sophie did not feel benefits in kind were necessary as she paid Esther a ‘fair wage’. In order to save money Esther walked to and from work, this took her forty-five minutes each way. This was tiring but Esther much preferred this option than living-in with her

employer. Apart from missing her daughters, Esther was convinced that Sophie would take advantage of her being there and maximise her hours accordingly. Esther believed that her wages were inadequate, her conditions of employment were unacceptable and that the personal relationship between herself and her employer was poor. In summary, Esther keenly felt that she was abused and vocalised her passive resistance to the unacceptable pay and treatment by her employer.

This case is indicative of the impact of the employer's power in the relationship and the effects of removing benevolence from the treatment of the employee. The example of Sophie, demonstrates the omnipotence of the employer to completely dictate the terms of the relationship. Because of her vulnerability, Esther had no choice but to accept the coercive practices of her employer. The difference between Sophie and the other employers was that she chose to wield her power in an overt and abusive manner. All the other employers, irrespective of their colour, had similar reservoirs of power in their relationships with the servants. The difference was that they chose not to reveal, exercise or manipulate their power capacity in such a naked way as this employer. The significant point is that there were not the checks and balances in place to stop them acting like Sophie if they so desired and it was their personal choice not to do so. Firstly, this is because the ambits of labour legislation are difficult to implement. As discussed elsewhere the logistics of policing this sector of employment are not practical, as there are between 1-2mil domestic workers in South Africa. In addition, as the places of work are also the private domains of employers, the monitoring by state impinges on their rights to privacy. Secondly, the personal circumstances of the domestic workers were similar in that they were the main income source for their families and had no viable alternatives to earn the

necessary finances for family maintenance. As such their vulnerability was acute and their dependence on their employer was absolute.

If we apply the Foucauldian conception of power this adds further dimensions to the analysis. In asserting that power is ubiquitous and pervasive within the social system, the employer is an 'agent' of power rather than a power source. Therefore, it could be argued that the entrapping social circumstances of the domestic workers are a manifestation and outcome of the 'complex of micro-powers' which permeates within the societal structures (Sheridan, 1994: 139). Sophie was able to exercise extensive power over Esther because she fed herself on the infinite power sources within the societal framework, which were already oppressing Esther. In simplistic terms, the power of social inequalities oppressed Esther into her marginalised social position, which in turn left her exposed to the dictates of an 'agent of power', that is, the employer. Sophie manipulated the societal power sources to her advantage, all the other employers had the same access to these resources if they so wished. I do not propose to consider the validity of the Foucauldian perspective rather to focus on its implications. If Foucault is correct, then ubiquitous power is virtually unassailable by atomised and isolated individuals. Resistance strategies, to be effective, would need to be drawn and executed from within a collective group. For example, Anderson's (2000) report of the success of Kalayaan the UK based group campaigning for the rights of migrant domestic servants is illustrative of the point. Esther, in line with all the other domestic workers I interviewed, had no affiliations with organised groups of domestic workers. She expressed a desire to have a minimum wage, statutory protection, and a curtailment of the employer's abusive practices. However, as a 'single voice' she felt impotent and powerless to overcome the power exercised by her employer.

The disbanding of SADWU in 1996 has to be viewed as a retrogressive step for promoting and ensuring the fair treatment of domestic workers in South Africa. Cases such as Esther's highlight the need for a forum for domestic workers to call on if so needed. Indeed, all of the domestic workers interviewed would benefit from the support of a collective body. The kindly manner by the employers obscures the reality of their treatment to their employees. The low wages, the lack of written employment contracts, the failure to provide pension provision were common features. It is important for them to have the opportunity to compare their circumstances one with another. This could lead to a heightened awareness and recognition of their rights as workers in this sector of employment. As this case study has illustrated, race is not the only factor that can lead to abusive practices. The class differential is also capable of designating the domestic worker into the role of the 'other'. The 'chains of otherness' that binds the domestic workers are the outcome of societal forces together with the personal actions of the employers, and as such are affirmations of subservience and difference. It is only through the power of the collective body that the domestic worker becomes empowered to reject her positioning as the 'other' and have higher expectations and demands from the employment relationship.

Case Study 9: Xhosa employer and Xhosa maid.

9-(i) Employer's profile: - Lidelwa

The home Lidelwa resided in did not belong to her. The accommodation was part of her husband's employment package. He held the position of rector of a religious college. The home has a dual purpose as it served both as a home and a religious 'retreat' for visitors. The property consisted of extensive grounds and a building complex, which included a college annex. The house itself could only be described as

a mansion. This was not only a home but also a symbolic representation of the church within the area. The home itself had the following spacious rooms downstairs; lounge, study, dining room, TV room, laundry room and kitchen. Upstairs there were four bathrooms in addition to the bedrooms. Lidelwa had lived there for the last seven years but her husband's appointment was coming to the end of its term and they would move to Cape Town by the end of 2000. Through the years, the family had relocated many times. Lidelwa stated that one of her husband's appointments had been a three-year secondment to England. She informed me that although she had enjoyed the experience, the British weather was something that she did not miss. 'It's too cold and wet'. As they were now getting older they had decided that Cape Town would be the place they would like to retire to and so when this move happened they would buy their own property. Lidelwa talking about her proposed home stated:

It won't be as grand as this it will be somewhat more modest.
It has been nice living here but it is not our own place. Grahamstown is not the place we would like to settle. Our daughter is at UCT [University of Cape Town] at the moment. And we like it down there. I hope to be working full-time so I will probably employ a maid one day a week just to help me out.

Lidelwa was forty-six years of age, married with two children. As stated in the quote, her daughter was away at University and her other child, a sixteen-year-old boy was at school in Grahamstown. He also was planning to attend UCT. This was another motivating factor in the family planning permanent residence in Cape Town. Lidelwa was a qualified teacher and was employed as such in the Grahamstown area. She was concerned that when moving to Cape Town would she be able to find another position. It had been difficult at times trying to fit her career around her husband's. She was going to start the process of applying for jobs at the beginning of 2000. Even if this meant that she had to travel to the Cape for interviews, she was prepared to do

this. She remarked, 'I will take the time to spend some time with my daughter. My husband and son will be fine looking after themselves for a few days.' Lidelwa felt that in her life she had been fortunate in that the apartheid system had not effected her life detrimentally. I asked her why this was and she replied that her itinerant life style meant that they had constantly moved, and this often had meant leaving South Africa for a time. As a child, she had been brought up in the Transkei region. She remarked, 'I don't know why, but some how you were treated differently in the Transkei. Apartheid never personally effected me.' Lidelwa went on to explain that it had been her experience that different areas of South Africa had not implemented apartheid practices in the same way. Grahamstown, particularly was a 'conservative' area and she was relieved that she had not been brought up here as a child. In exploring Lidelwa's definition of 'conservatism' she indicated that she was referring to the pervasive racial segregation practices that had been maintained in the area during apartheid.

Lidelwa had been brought up in a village in the Transkei and had lived in a hut, which had neither electricity nor water. 'It was very different from this'. She can remember having to walk a considerable distance to the river every morning, before going to school, to fetch the water for her mother. Her mother had never worked and had always been there for the children. However, education was high on the agenda for all the family. Lidelwa had an uncle and an aunt who were both teachers and they had taken an avid interest in the lives of their nephews and nieces. Lidelwa firmly believed that education was essential for all black children. However, this was not always easy. In Grahamstown, many children 'do well' at school but their parents cannot afford to pay for higher education such as 'technikons' or universities. These children just then sit around in the townships with no education. In Lidelwa's

opinion, this was potentially dangerous as their frustration could easily translate into aggression. Her maid Florence had personally experienced the terrible consequences of unleashed violence.

Florence's mother had previously worked for the college and Lidelwa had arranged for a telephone to be installed in her home in the township when she retired. This was in case she ever needed assistance and enabled her to contact Florence at work if necessary. One particular morning she did telephone Florence, and Lidelwa, who was elsewhere in the home, heard her start to scream. She knew something was seriously wrong, as Florence was always a quiet and conscientious person. Florence's ten-year-old sister had been followed to a local shop by a neighbour. An argument had developed and as a result she was fatally stabbed. Lidelwa remembers it as a terrible time. Florence's mother Violet had become a close friend and Lidelwa had felt powerless to ease her pain. 'We just did what we could to help them'. She still kept in contact with Violet and they saw each other from time to time.

Lidelwa said that the friendship of the whole family was important to her and Violet was the first person she would contact if she needed help. She recalled the time she had to go on a trip unexpectedly she had telephoned Violet and asked if she could come. Violet had come straight away. The college employed Florence in that they paid her wages. Lidelwa did not know what the figure was, as this was Florence's private business. Florence would come to her for two hours per day and then for the rest of the time she would go and clean at the college building itself. From time to time Lidelwa and her husband would entertain in the evenings and often required assistance. Florence was always 'happy' to oblige and because this was outside her normal hours was given extra payments. The college arranged overtime payments for

her. Lidelwa was pleased that she did not directly employ Florence. This was because Florence's employment position was more secure. 'Working for the college rather than us means that when we come to leave it won't make a difference. Florence will still have a job.'

I asked Lidelwa if Violet had personally worked for her or the college. Like her daughter, she had been employed by the college and since her retirement has been receiving a college pension. Lidelwa preferred this type of arrangement to that of a personal one, but did not specifically state why, only that it made the relationship less complicated. Perhaps Lidelwa had intuitively grasped that within the domestic service context there are many conflicting relationships. For example, that of employee and friend, having social distance and intimacy and the possibility of employers' transience set against the employees' dependency. The shift in the terms of this domestic service relationship modified some of these contradictions and made it simpler for Lidelwa to relate to Florence. Florence was not her 'responsibility'. On Florence's part, her dependence on Lidelwa was not as intense as the other domestic workers I interviewed. Therefore, the embodiment of her labour was not completely circumscribed by the dictates of her employer. As such, she had the opportunity of acting as a woman rather than like a child in her dealings with Lidelwa. Equally, Lidelwa did not invoke the parental role in directing or responding to Florence.

9-(ii) Servant's profile: - Florence

Florence was forty years of age at the time of interview. She had never been married but had a two-year old daughter. She was unprepared to discuss any details about her daughter's father, only stated that she was by herself and did not have a boyfriend. By choice, she preferred to live in her parents' home because she was too nervous to

live by herself. Her sister's murder still 'lived' with her and on many occasions, she became extremely agitated without any obvious cause. Florence believed the townships to be highly dangerous with rape, murder and robbery common features of life there. It was her opinion that it was not safe for a woman to live by herself. Therefore, Florence was committed to living in her childhood home as long as her parents remained alive. The home consisted of six rooms. The house had electricity, a telephone but no inside water. Florence's three sisters were all unemployed and came to stay at the house on many occasions. Although Florence had a great dislike and fear of the townships, she did not envisage herself ever leaving. The reasons she gave are as follows:

I'm paid good wages but they're not enough to get us out.
I have to pay for my daughter to be looked after whilst I'm
at work. I must help my family too. None of my sisters have
jobs. We have to help them.

Neither of her parents were well and Florence could never leave her daughter in their care. Florence would like to have spent more time with her child but had to work. She had herself in her formative years experienced many times without her mother. This pattern was now being repeated with her daughter. As a young girl her father had become sick and she had to leave school to care for her younger sisters whilst their mother went to work as a domestic. Of all the things she regretted most in her life was leaving school early. Florence could read and write well and had hoped to attend a college and have a job other than a domestic. Florence was relieved that she had employment but did express the view that the work of a domestic worker was exhausting and physically challenging. She was only working in this capacity because there were no other alternatives open to her. I asked her if she had the choice what other job would she have liked to do. Her response was, 'A sewing one. Then I could sit all day without having to move anywhere. That would be nice'. She was

laughing as she made this response and after some more thought, stated that as a young girl she had planned to become a teacher or a nurse. The worst tasks in domestic work were washing and ironing, which she avoided if she could. I asked if she ever washed and ironed for Lidelwa and she responded 'No'. She then proceeded to laugh and explained that everyone knew her dislike of them and she was 'saved' from doing them whilst at work.

I then discussed with Florence her relationship with Lidelwa and she stated that it was a good one. 'Madam' was a friend to the family. Florence did not feel like she worked for Lidelwa rather that she came to 'help out' in the house. She did not see much of Lidelwa as she was often out when she came and she was only there herself for two hours in the morning. Florence would decide what jobs needed doing in Lidelwa's absence and then would get on and do them. However, she never checked if there was any washing to be done. The college was her employer and she worked for 'them'. This was a 'proper' job as she had a contract of employment and a pension plan. 'They' were good employers to work for and paid her good wages. She felt that she had been extremely fortunate to get the job, as working for colleges was a preferred choice of many domestic workers but they were hard to come by. Florence believed that she had secured the job because her mother had been the previous domestic employed by the college. When the time came for her retirement, she had asked the college if her daughter could come and take her place. 'They' had agreed and Florence had worked here ever since. Florence had felt great relief in being able to leave her employment with her white employer and commence here. Florence hoped that she never had to work for a white woman again and that she could always work for a college rather than a 'madam'.

Her last employer had been a white woman and although she was 'kind' to her, it had been a 'bad' time for Florence. It has only been working for the college and getting the wages that she did now that she had come to understand just how badly paid she had been. When everyone else was receiving the same amount of wages there is nothing to be done but accept them. The problem then was trying to manage on the money that was paid. She remarked:

It's no good working for whites they don't pay enough. You can't live on what they pay you. My last madam she paid me R300 a month. You can't live on that. But you can't ask them for more wages 'cos they'll just get rid of you. I worked for her three days a week. But there was just no work for the other two days. You just get by.

Florence did believe a minimum wage should be set so that all domestic workers received 'good wages' like hers. However, she also felt that many employers would just not employ domestics any more. Some money was better than nothing. She felt that it would be better if domestic workers did not work for 'madams' but had other jobs to go to. She was hoping that 'things' would get better and there would be more jobs for black people. If this did happen, she believed that many domestic workers would choose to leave their employers and get other jobs. It was not about liking employers and the job, but getting more money to help their families. It was her opinion that crime was so bad in the townships because many were unhappy with not having anything. Florence was determined that her daughter would have an education and therefore not have to become a domestic when she grew to adulthood.

9-(iii) Domestic Service relationship:

The terms and conditions of this domestic relationship were far superior to all the others. Florence was the only one of my interviewees who had a written contract of employment and a pension package for her eventual retirement. Her wages were also two to three times higher than the majority of the domestic service workers in the case

studies. Florence was paid R950 per month and in addition she was given a housing allowance. This was a scheme offered for the employees of the college to save towards property purchase. She had paid entitlement to all public bank holidays and four weeks annual leave. These conditions were in line with the legal requirements for the employing of domestic workers set out in BCEA. As indicated in Florence's profile, she was unequivocal in her understanding that she was an employee of the college rather than Lidelwa. To recap, the work she performed for Lidelwa was perceived as 'helping out'. Therefore, the terms and conditions of the employment relationship with Lidelwa had distinctive arrangements and features to that of the others. This is in addition to the fact that both Lidelwa and Florence were both of Xhosa origin.

Florence was not on first name terms with her employer and like all the other domestic workers called her employer 'Madam'. It can therefore be assumed that although Florence explicitly did not acknowledge Lidelwa as her employer, implicitly she had recognised that there was an employment relationship between them. However, there were distinctive characteristics to her relationship with Lidelwa. Firstly, unlike the other interviewees she did not express personal gratitude towards her employer. For example, she did not echo the sentiments of many of the domestic workers that her employer was 'kind'. Her comments related to the working relationship between them rather than the personal attributes of her employer. She stated such things as, 'I help out, I see what needs doing and do it, Madam leaves me to it'. Florence was keen to emphasise that working in the house was only a small part of her day. This is significant as the hours spent together of the two women was limited and Florence's dependency was not exclusively focused on her employer. Secondly, it was noteworthy that childlike phrases and actions were not apparent in

the interview or in my observations of her interactions with Lidelwa. Not once for instance, did Florence use familial terminology or put forward evidence to suggest her personal intimacy with Lidelwa. Other domestics had described 'the good' things that their employers had done for them, Florence refrained from this. However, their relationship did appear close and Florence made the point that Lidelwa was a friend of the whole family. During the period following her sister's murder Lidelwa had offered assistance to all of them including her father. This was cited as an example of friendship rather than a demonstration of the 'kindness' of Lidelwa.

Unlike the other domestic workers, Florence was comfortable in criticising aspects of her job, which she did not like to do. Her intense dislike of washing and ironing was openly discussed in Lidelwa's presence and they both laughed together about it. Florence was the only one of my interviewees to state that domestic work was hard and difficult to do. (Esther 8-(ii) was also critical, but her focus was the personal abuse of her employer rather than domestic work per se.) It was also Florence's opinion that there must be easier jobs to do than this. It can be concluded that because her financial circumstances were not so desperate as the other interviewees, she was not so focused on survival and was questioning the quality of her work experience. This does support Maslow's hierarchy of needs conception in which only after physical needs are met that higher needs, such as fulfilment, become important to individuals. Other domestic workers were emphatic that they 'enjoyed' domestic work and 'nothing' was unpleasant. Perhaps their desperation was manifesting itself in this vocalised commitment to their work tasks. Furthermore that for their embodied labour to be acceptable it required enthusiastic participation to the tasks in hand. Any dissension, criticism or unwillingness to perform the expected duties could result in sanctions such as loss of employment.

Florence's case study validates my assertion in respect of the outcome of benefits in kind, which was discussed in the previous chapter. I have argued that low wages, supplemented by these supplementary handouts will inevitably produce and maintain subservience, dependence and gratitude, that is, promote the development of a paternalistic or 'pseudo-maternalistic' relationship. Florence's relatively better financial position to that of the other domestic workers had minimalised the familial propensities which are evident in the domestic service context. Florence had earned her wages and was not dependent on 'the gifts, presents and kindness' of Lidelwa. Her demeanour and deference were not required to extract these extras from the employer, as she was not so dependent or desperate to receive them. Her payments had already been negotiated within the formal employment contract. Supplementing wages with benefits in kind is a powerful tool in compelling the embodied labour of the domestic worker to be constantly aligned to the dictates and demands of her employer. This is because, it is only through the acceptable performance of her labour that the worker can ensure the continuation of the benefits in kind dispensed by her employer.

Lidelwa was also unique in that she appeared quite ambivalent to the employing of servants. In her proposed move to the Cape, she was only planning to have 'help' one day a week. The employing of servants appeared to be motivated by instrumental considerations rather than her own dependency requirements. This was in stark contrast to Brenda 1-(i) who despite her difficulties in finding a 'good' servant had continued until she had 'found' Jessie 1-(ii). Perhaps the significant difference was the fact that Lidelwa's mother had been there for her during her formative years. Brenda had been raised by a black nanny, and although not openly acknowledging this, wanted a black 'mother' within her life. The fieldwork did not consider any life

histories in-depth but if it had, the above factors that I have highlighted may well have assumed considerable significance. The domestic service relationships were exclusively female ones. Therefore, 'motherlessness' and 'mothering' experiences may offer another dimension for the dependency of both parties with this complex and contradictory relationship. Florence herself had to mind her family whilst her mother was at work. Similarly, her daughter was now being deprived of much of her time so she too could work. I still would argue that it is the income differential that is the major contributing factor to the development of familial ideologies. However, the personal familial experience will also contribute to its perpetuation in this sector of employment. To be 'motherless' exacerbates the response to kindness and the need to mother enhances the intimacy of the relationship.

Concluding remarks:

Deliberately included in all of the eighteen profiles in the study was a brief description of the respective homes of all the participants. My intention was to highlight and contrast the living arrangements of the employers to their servants. In addition, to offer another concrete example of the 'othering' within the domestic service relationship. The emphatic difference between their respective homes was for all the domestic workers a confirmation of their inequality, subservience and material inferiority. As stated elsewhere, on a daily basis as the domestic worker left her home for that of her employer, this contrast reaffirmed that she lived the way that she did because she was black, or as in these cases, because of her lower class position. Therefore, in the domestic service relationship there is a perpetuation of 'the other' status. As the 'other' to the employer, there is the constant pressure for the worker to mould herself to her employer's requirements. To clarify the point, she negates her 'otherness' by becoming the embodiment of acceptable labour. Her deference,

childlike demeanour and obedience are her implicit acknowledgement that she has conformed to her subordinate role within the relationship. Her 'chains of otherness' are truly binding.

In this chapter, the differences in the homes of Theresa's 7-(i) and Martha's 7-(ii) and Lidelwa 9-(i) and Florence 9-(ii) were the most marked out of all the case studies. The shown contrast of how the women lived substantiates the assertion that there is a vast chasm between incomes in the South African context, which has manifested itself in the quality of life for the differentiated groups. The only women who commented on the standard of their homes were the four agency workers who expressed the view that it was wrong that their homes were so inadequate. All of the other interviewees expressed no resentment that their accommodation was significantly inferior to that of the white community. If we take the arguments outside 'the other' conceptions, the reasons for their acceptance of such a lack in their amenities to that of the white community are difficult to grasp. Can we assume that apartheid had 'trained' them for a substandard life-style because of their racial subservience? If this is the case why did Martha and Florence take such pride in their employers' homes? Indeed, for non-white employers with luxurious homes, it could be expected that this would accentuate for their domestic workers the injustices of their own life experiences. As employees of non-white women, there was not the white and black societal division to explain their differing circumstances. Rather, their work experiences were a witness that non-white women were now achieving material success. As such this challenges the assumption that domestic workers had grown accustomed to the outcomes of racial segregation. If this statement were true, their respective employers would evoke in them resentment and awareness of the potentiality of bridging the wealth gap between the races. If racial subjugation is not the explanation for acquiescence to

lifestyle inequalities, what are the factors that act as the pacifiers and agents of conformity? Another question that reoccurred to me many times was this, seeing the immense gulf in their respective standard of living to that of their employers, how could these domestic workers be so trusting as to believe that their employers were paying them what they could afford? I concluded that the answers to these questions were to be found beyond the parameters of racial differences and were situated within the domestic service relationship itself. Therefore, the colour of the employers was not the major significant factor in influencing their employees to endure rather than resent their dire poverty.

A major contributing factor in domestic workers accepting and not challenging their poor life-styles as compared to their employers is the close personal relationship that the majority of them had with their employers. Kindness is able to dissipate and squash feelings of anger and injustice for the domestic servant. Her employer is her 'mother, friend and ally' and this strengthens her to persevere against immense personal challenges. However, there is a proviso; isolation and relative illiteracy intensifies the effects of kindly actions by the employers on the perceptions of their servants. The exceptions to acquiescence were the domestic agency workers and Jane 6-(ii). The domestic agency workers were strengthened by their collectivity and were beginning to question why there was such a differential in their homes to that of whites. Whilst Jane, as an educated woman, felt empowered but powerless to change her life. However, even in these cases, blame was allocated to the wider society and their employers were perceived as 'good women who were doing their best'. Anderson (2000), as discussed, has argued that kindness enhances the power of the employer in the relationship with the servant; this needs to be extended. Kindness can also act as an opiate in that it dulls the discernment of the worker in assessing the

validity of the claims of their employers that wages paid are the maximum that they can afford. The kindness dynamic transcends colour in that a caring employer, irrespective of her skin, was trusted implicitly by their servants.

It is interesting to note that Esther 8-(ii) earned the highest wages but disliked her employer intensely, whilst Jessie 1-(ii) was paid the lowest wages but loved her employer immensely. The determining factor in these servants' relationships with their employers was their respective treatments by Sophie 8-(i) and Brenda 1-(i). Sophie was extremely harsh in her dealings with Esther, whereas Brenda donned a maternal role with Jessie. Esther felt that her wages were inadequate and that her employer was exploiting her. Jessie felt her wages were acceptable because her employer was 'paying what she could' and consequently was not abusing their relationship. Therefore, it can be concluded that these domestic workers did not assess wages paid in the ways one would expect them to. The maxim 'a labourer is worth his hire' does not always hold sway in the domestic service context. Domestic servants will feel valued not only by the amount of wages that their employers pay to them, but also in the ways they are treated. The professed familial bonding by both parties in the relationship will continue to facilitate the perpetuation of low wages in this sector of employment. Furthermore, this familial ideology is not exclusive to South Africa and therefore will be an instrument in maintaining low wages for domestic workers in other contexts. As this chapter has demonstrated racial difference is not essential for paternalism and 'pseudo-maternalism' to flourish. The class differential easily accommodates these types of ideological formations. The income divide between employers and their servants is the root cause and influence on the social practices within the domestic service relationship. Therefore, race and class differences are secondary factors and as such will manifest themselves along similar

lines, as they are both reflective of the wealth inequalities within the wider societal setting. In other words, economic apartheid permeates within the domestic service context, as did the earlier political regime, which was the focus of Cock's 1979 study.

Another factor in the domestic workers' passivity to their circumstances was that their comparative awareness was not centred on their employers. On numerous occasions I was informed by my interviewees that there were those in the townships who were in a far worse situation than they were. The majority of them felt 'lucky to have a job'. Although Florence 9-(ii) disliked her job, she also stated that she was fortunate to have her employment. Chronic unemployment was a reality that the domestic workers openly acknowledged and feared. In a sense it can be argued that the domestic workers, from their class locations, were more concerned with what was 'below' them rather than what was 'above'. The precariousness of their lives was founded on the fact that their employment as a domestic worker was the only vehicle available them to ease the burdens of their poverty. In suggesting that the domestic workers were gullible to their employers' claims of 'fair wages', perhaps this needs to be reconsidered. These women had no alternative but to accept low wages, as there were other women in the townships so desperate that they would work for the wages being paid to them. Intuitively the domestic workers had understood the imperatives of the market. Excess supply results in a lowering of price. The large pools of unskilled workers will perpetuate and maintain the minimal wages paid in this sector of employment. Instinctively the initial assessment of the trust of the domestic workers was that it was a manifestation of them centring themselves in their Child ego-state – this is maybe an incorrect assessment. If I am right in my conclusion that domestic workers are utilising pragmatic realism because of their lack of viable

alternatives, they are far from acting as children. This is another example of them using their 'resources' available to them from their Adult ego-state, e.g. assuming the role of the child to secure security of position with their employers. This strategy was not exclusive to white employers and their servants, as within these final three case studies there were indicators of 'childlike' behaviour in two of the workers. This is because there are some non-white employers, in line with their white counterparts, who have utilised market forces to their advantage and their employees, through dependence strategies, have sought to bind themselves more strongly to them in order to avoid the destitution that would result from having no job.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

It has been my great privilege to fight a struggle for freedom[...] which has been victorious in my lifetime. In these last years I have experienced the complexities of governing a nation that seeks to overcome a legacy of social deprivation, and I am profoundly aware of how much is still to be done. I have witnessed the enormity of the task, still to be completed [...] Knowing that I leave the governance of South Africa in strong and wise hands [...] I approach the end of my public life with my heart full of hope.

Nelson Mandela, Davos, 29 January 1999.

To return to the initial objective of the research; this was to discover if the ending of apartheid had improved the lives of black domestic workers in South Africa. As explained, domestic service is an occupation in the country, which is dominated by relatively unskilled black women who have traditionally been underpaid and over worked. The examination of their work experience is of significance, because as they are such a marginalised group within South African society, achievement of improvements in their working conditions must be assumed slower than other sectors of employment. This is because the nature of domestic work makes it difficult for labour legislation implementation to be monitored and enforced and the interrelationships between employers and servants are enacted behind closed doors, away from public view. To support this point, Grossman's 1997 assertion that 'goodwill' of employers is the only viable means for pay and conditions of domestic workers to be improved has been discussed within the thesis. Therefore, any evidence of amelioration for the domestic service sector would be an encouraging sign that working conditions for black South African women per se may be improving. Cock's (1989/1979) central argument that this employment relationship was a 'microcosm' of apartheid was another influencing factor in the decision to utilise domestic service as a vehicle to examine the dismantling of apartheid. Improvements in the lives of

domestic workers would be a positive indicator that the pervasive legacies of the social practices of apartheid were diminishing. My fieldwork was conducted in Cock's original research site in order to facilitate the use of her findings as the starting point to my own research.

My theoretical objectives were at variance to Cock's. Her focus had been to incorporate the then prevalent domestic labour debate from a feminist-Marxist framework. I have argued that with the removal of apartheid the fear of social censure may inhibit the vocalisation of racial prejudices. Therefore, I have justified the incorporation of a different theoretical level to the examination of domestic service, which Cock had not felt necessary in her original research. My remit was an examination of the hidden meanings situated within the interpersonal relationships between employers and their servants. For example, I not only considered the words of the respective parties in the domestic service relationship, but also their actions and interrelationships one to another. Utilising a qualitative approach I did not seek a representative sample, rather I chose nine diverse domestic service relationships to explore my theoretical arguments. The outcome of this, was the narrowing of the research objective to primarily focus on the nine case studies investigated. Data from my other interviews was used to substantiate and clarify my theoretical points. In addition, I supported my findings with quantitative data from Census 96 not only to contextualise the lives of the women I interviewed, but also to consider the wider factors for domestic service in general in South Africa.

This loss of representativeness was necessary in order to facilitate the depth of the theoretical analysis. Significantly, many employers had distanced themselves from apartheid, denying both their involvement and knowledge of its ramifications. S.

Cohen (2000:9) argues that 'states of denial' can 'be individual, personal, psychological and private - or shared, social, collective and organised.' He further asserts that this phenomenon is perpetuated in many different social and cultural contexts.

If the perpetrator is your own government, this must touch your own identity and political role. You are not responsible for the atrocities - you may be an opponent of the government or a potential victim. But this is your country. As a citizen, however distant or critical, you are bound by collective ties of culture, history and loyalty (Cohen, 2000:19).

My discovery of employers' 'denials' only emerged during the research process. This was a further validation of the choice of methodology, as their vocalised denials of adherence to, or involvement with, racial or discriminatory practices needed to be set against the interrelationships with their servants. To clarify the point, there was a dichotomy between words and actions, which only became apparent by the in-depth interview techniques and analysis.

I have argued that a significant feature of this employment relationship has been the contradiction of simultaneously depersonalising domestic workers, by treating them as children, but at the same time demanding their 'personhood' in the labour provided. The outcome has been that the domestic worker's embodied labour, that is, her dress, demeanour and perceived personality conforming to the dictates and requirements of her employer. The workers' tacit acceptance of their 'other' status has exacerbated their conformity and acquiescence to employers' expectations. Therefore, within the thesis I have allocated space for their individual 'voices' to be heard. There was a twofold purpose to this. Firstly, it was to recognise their individual status rather than that of a caricatured collective group and a reaffirmation that they were women and not the designated child. Secondly, to contextualise their lives beyond the domestic

service relationship. I have asserted that these workers have been 'trapped' into their 'chains of otherness' not only by the exercised power of their employers, but also by the wider societal forces such as extreme income differentials. Having a brief overview of the quality of their lives substantiates these assertions.

As explained in the methodology, although I was able to interview various employers from different race and class backgrounds, I was not able to interview domestic workers from different age ranges. The only relative young servant was Jane 6-(ii), as all the other interviewees were between 40-58 years of age. Older servants were the preferred choice of many employers and with large pools of unemployed domestic workers within the Grahamstown area, their preferences could be accommodated. A recurring comment in my interviews with these older workers was that 'it was too late' for them. This perception will have a significant influence on their interrelationships with their employers, as their vulnerability, amenability and compliance becomes exacerbated because of their lack of viable employment alternatives. Brenda 1-(i) specifically referred to the problems with younger servants and asserted that they caused 'problems' because they did not know their place. Younger women, from Brenda's own experience, answered back and were not as deferential as she would like. Therefore, my results will have been affected by the fact that domestic workers were older women. Being older weakened their positions with their employers, with the outcome that the power differential in the domestic service relationship was maximised. In future research I would seek out younger women employed as domestic workers, in order to compare their interrelationships with their employers as against the older women in my sample. Jane was a younger woman working as a domestic worker, but her education, and the fact that her education was funded for by her employer, obscured the age variable.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw their ‘voices’ and theoretical analysis together in order to answer the research question. As intimated in the Introduction I am mindful of Thompson’s (1968) distinction between ‘standard of life’ and ‘the way of life’, which I have interpreted as the first to be the measurement of quantities of material goods that the domestic workers had, and the second a description of their qualities of life. The first is relatively more easy to ascertain than the second. In applying his differentiation to the domestic service context, the first is applicable to terms and conditions of employment together with the amount of amenities that the wages provided. The second relates to how each worker was treated by her employer and her own perception of the quality of her life. The chapter is divided into four sections, the first two will specifically relate to the research question using the Thompson distinction. Improvements in the lives of domestic service will first be considered in terms of their pay and conditions of employment set against their personal circumstances. My findings will make use of Cock’s in order to discover if in these aspects there have been any improvements since the ending of apartheid. The second section will examine the social practices in the domestic service context. The remit here will be to examine the treatment of domestic workers in the current situation, again with the objective of ascertaining if there have been any positive shifts. In this section, some common features between Cock’s and my study will be highlighted.

The remit of this second section is wider than an exclusive focus on the improvements in the lives of domestic servants as I am also examining the domestic service relationship through a different theoretical perspective to that of Cock. Here I will also draw together my research findings and theoretical conceptions without any direct reference to Cock’s study. The third and forth sections move beyond the

research question being asked. I discovered similar life patterning in my interviewees to that of Cock's, that raised a further consideration. The question here is have domestic workers been active agents in their own marginalisation, and as such has this been a factor in the improvements in the qualities of their lives being curtailed? I will use Lewis's (1959) controversial 'culture of poverty' conception to explore the habituation that I discovered. It is important to note that the weaknesses and significant flaws in Lewis's argument are recognised and will be discussed. Therefore, the section is not aiming to validate his assertions, rather to use them as an examination vehicle. The final section is again outside the research remit, but is necessary in response to my conclusions drawn from section three. The focus here will be my proposed recommendations of empowerment strategies for these marginalised women. As a key feature of domestic service is the intimacy between the parties in the relationship, my attention in this final section will be centred on how domestic workers can be empowered from their relatively powerless position within the domestic service framework.

(i) Terms and conditions of employment:

The first improvement to consider in the lives of domestic workers since the dismantling of apartheid, is their inclusion in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 1994 and the Labour Relations Act (LRA) 1995. (The specific details of BCEA have been outlined in Appendix 3). In summary of its main points, employers now have a legal duty to ensure that their employees have a written contract, entitlement to paid public bank holidays and annual leave, set hours of work with compulsory rest periods to be incorporated within the working day. LRA offers these workers protection from 'unfair' dismissals and other 'unfair' labour practices. Therefore, employers' failure to meet these standards and requirements are illegal and

as such, they are liable to legal sanctions and prosecution. For example, the South African *Star* newspaper (5 Feb 1997) in its in-depth article on the legal rights of domestic workers indicated that an employer who fails to abide by the minimum conditions is liable to receive one year's imprisonment or a hefty fine or both. It can be concluded that post-apartheid domestic workers now have the formal frameworks for legal redress, which were denied to them during the apartheid era. This is a positive shift for domestic service in the current context. However, as I have highlighted, the implementation of the tenets of this labour legislation has proven difficult to enforce and monitor. To reiterate, the logistics of inspection are impractical, as there are approximately between 1 and 2mil domestic workers employed in South Africa. There is also the fact that the workplace is the private domicile of the employer, who has the legal right to privacy, which compromises the access to inspect by legal bodies.

Of the nine informants, the only one whose contract complied with legislation was Florence 9-(ii). However, her employer was a college rather than an individual 'madam'. There was confusion in the understanding of labour legislation both by employers and their employees. Some servants had little comprehension of labour legislation (see Martha 7-(ii)). Gail 3-(i) on the other hand, had investigated the legal requirements for employing domestics and farm workers and had made the deliberate choice to ignore the legal requirements. The domestic workers' legal rights in the case studies were dormant and were waived by both parties. Employers clearly felt immune to punitive state intervention and employees, in their anxiety to maintain their employment status, did not assert pressure for their entitlements. The retrogressive disbanding of SADWU has to a certain extent negated the potential benefits of labour legislation for this sector of employment. None of the domestic workers had

affiliations with organised trade unions or other collective bodies. Official representation could have been a tool to invoke and ensure their legal rights in the sector. As atomised workers, none of them negotiated or challenged the terms and conditions of their employment. For example, wages paid were totally determined by their employers on an ad hoc basis. This despite the fact that wages were inadequate as shown by Alvera's situation. Alvera was Claire's 6-(i) second maid who on numerous occasions had asked for 'loans' to meet bills she was unable to pay.

With the exception of Florence 9-(ii) wages paid were inadequate. Therefore, in this aspect there has been no measurable improvement in these specific cases since the ending of apartheid. Interviews with employers revealed that within the area of Grahamstown there was an informal network for recruitment of servants and setting of wages. Irrespective of class, race or creed wages paid were consistently low. Employers' justification that they paid what they could may not have always been true. For example, Helen 4-(i), the working class employer, paid wages, which matched more affluent employers, such as Theresa 7-(i). The income differential, revealed by their respective homes, was significant and implicitly suggests that wage scales were not set by employer's ability to pay but rather by the cheapness of labour within the market. These low wages made it extremely difficult for employees to contribute some of their earnings to a pension fund for their retirement. The following three domestic worker pension products minimum contributions would approximate to between 20%-40% of Jessie's wages 1- (ii)-the lowest paid worker. The Fensure-Workers Fund targeted employers to take out the fund with their domestic workers as the beneficiaries. The minimum payment was R20 but contributions of up to R700 could be facilitated. (This upper figure was three times greater than Jessie's wages). The Absa Worker's Fund suggested contributions from

R40 to R250 per month. The Old Mutual- Domestic Loyalty Plan had a minimum contribution of R40 per month with no upper limit. Excluding Florence, none of the employers or employees interviewed were making contributions to pension schemes. The outcome for these workers was that retirement was not considered as an option and they were committed to work as long as they were physically able. This was another similarity to Cock's interviewees, and therefore in this aspect, for these women, it can be concluded there has been no improvement.

Wages were supplemented by benefits in kind. In cases such as Katrina's 5-(i) they were substantial. (It is important to remember that given benefits in kind will be included in the calculation of the minimum wage). The workers interviewed, who received these types of payments, were grateful and they were a decisive factor in developing their close personal relationships with their employers. For example, Martha 7-(ii) referred to her benefits from Theresa 7-(i) as 'presents', which increased both her gratitude to her employer and bonding. The social implications of benefits in kind have been discussed in the analysis of the fieldwork and will be summarised in the next section of this chapter. In considering these types of payments in relation to terms and conditions, they can be viewed as superior to those given in Cock's study. She found that the predominant benefits in kind were the daily food allocations, which often were rationed. She states:

These payments were not as large or comprehensive as I had expected. For example, while all employers provided at least one meal a day, the quantity and quality varied a great deal [...] One employer commented, "I don't like to throw anything away so I give it to her rather". Another said, 'I give her what the dogs wouldn't like. Thirty-eight per cent gave their servants the same food as they ate themselves, and forty-four per cent gave servants' rations only (Cock, 1989/1979: 129).

In my study, both employers and their domestics stated that food was freely accessible in the home. As discussed in the fieldwork the evidence suggests that there was a divergence to these professions and actions. For instance, Jessie's 1-(ii) was reluctant to open a new packet of tea in her employer's absence and ate very little. I have argued that social barriers may have been a contributing factor to Jessie's reticence in eating what she wanted, rather than the disapproval of Brenda 1-(i). To reiterate the earlier point, I utilised my 'chains of otherness' conception as a possible explanation as to why Jessie was reluctance in taking food from the home. The point is that the professed vocalised permission for food within the home suggests, that these domestic workers were more aware of what was acceptable to have and do, than the servants in Cock's study. Cock further noted that any other benefits usually came in the form of Christmas presents. Domestic workers in my case studies indicated that they received gifts from their employers throughout the year. This again is evidence to support my assertion that benefits in kind for these domestic workers, have increased since apartheid.

The most marked improvement for the domestic workers I interviewed was the reduction in hours now worked. Although only 22% of Cock's sample had resided with their employers, their protracted hours made them 'permanently available' for their employers. For example, Cock, (1989/1979: 127) cites one case in which the domestic worker started work at 6.00am finished at 9.00pm and worked for six days a week. Anderson (2000: 10) has asserted that her findings in respect of migrant domestic workers have many similarities to that of Cock. For example, migrant domestic workers were also expected to work long hours, which Anderson believes, could be in part due to the racial practices of their employers. To reiterate an earlier point, in my tour of Grahamstown I did note that many servants' quarters attached to

the white properties were now standing empty, which does suggest that the numbers of domestic workers residing with their employers is diminishing even further. This would seem to be another positive factor in the increased regulation of hours in this sector of employment. Natalie 2-(i) categorically stated that the practices of apartheid had never influenced the treatment of her servants. The evidence did not support her assertions. Before Rebecca's 2-(ii) employment, Natalie had employed Rebecca's mother and her hours during apartheid as compared to her daughter's, in the current South Africa, were considerably more. This may be an indicator that the BCEA legal requirement in respect of employment hours is curtailing employers' practices.

All the domestic workers found it easier to travel to work than in the past, as the townships were now considerably closer to the town. Although none of them openly compared their homes to their employers, the standard of their homes was a major preoccupation. None of them had inside water and to have a bathroom at some future time was a high priority. However, they were all resigned to the fact that on their wages the installation of such was impossible. The women did not expect any outside help and took sole responsibility for maintaining their families and homes. The only group to question why the standard of their homes was inadequate was the domestic agency workers, who stated that it was not right that they lived the way they did. Why were these domestic agency women questioning? To reiterate an earlier point, through their collectivity, these workers were beginning an informal questioning forum as to why they lived the lives that they did. However, the majority of the other interviewees were keen to state that their living arrangements had improved since apartheid. For example, now they all had their own water and toilet facilities in the yards. During apartheid, the water taps had been communal and their toilet wastes

had been collected once a week by a truck. Each remarked that in the summer the smell in the townships had been overpowering. From their perspective, living conditions have improved since the ending of apartheid, but there was still much that needed to be done. It has to be remembered that the Eastern Cape has the highest provincial poverty (71%) within South Africa. For their poverty to be ameliorated this will require more than an increase in their wages as individuals. The continuation of state driven social policies is essential to improve the living conditions for its marginalised groups such as these women. The *Economist's* (2001) figures indicate the extent of what still is to be done. Out of 10.7 mil households 3 mil have no electricity, 8mil out of population of 43 mil as yet do not have access to clean water. Mandela's remarks from his address to the World Economic Forum 29 January 1999 are worth repeating once more: 'South Africa knew from the outset that reconstruction and development would be even more difficult than the defeat of the apartheid system.' The addressing of these domestic workers social injustices will not come quickly, as they must wait for direct state intervention and continue to be reliant on the ad hoc benevolence of their employers.

Although the efficacy of BCEA has been found deficient, this has primarily been because of difficulties in implementation rather than the inadequacy of its protective measures. As set out in BCEA they are comprehensive and if adhered to would have a significant positive effect on the conditions of employment in this sector. It is important to note that within its remit is the 'proposed' introduction of a minimum wage. This was expected to come into force in 1999. The fact that this did not come to fruition in that year and as of the commencement of 2001 was not implemented is indicative of the controversy that its proposal has produced. The evidence from the majority of my interviews, not only the case studies, was that if the minimum wage

came to statute they would dismiss their servants. In my meetings with Department of Labour representatives in 1999, they too were expecting a 'backlash' from employers if the minimum wage became compulsory. Indeed, a motivating factor for Helen 4-(i) to start a domestic service agency was her belief that employers would prefer an ad hoc arrangement for the employing of servants because of the 'restrictions' of labour legislation. If this is the case and significant numbers of employers do sever the employment of their servants, this would be evidence to support my assertion that cheapness rather than 'need' has been the prime motivating factor in the decision to employ. One might argue that this was an exploitative opportunity, which they readily took.

As stated in my assessment of Natalie's 2-(i) claim that employers will have no choice but to terminate the employment arrangement because they are paying what they can afford is questionable. Firstly, as earlier indicated, wealthier employers in my sample paid similar wages to their poorer counterparts, this suggests market forces rather than personal incomes are the decisive factors. To clarify the point, the large pool of unskilled labour has resulted in domestic workers accepting any wages that have been offered. To reiterate Sophie's 8-(i) sentiments, she believed that because black women were so desperate for work she would have no 'difficulty' in obtaining a new maid if Esther 8-(ii) left her employ. PIR has quoted Gini coefficient of income inequality figures to prove that the South African income differentials are the second highest in the world, this only surpassed by Brazil. The figures challenge the 'ability to pay' arguments. However, as I stated in specific response to Natalie's claim in 2-(iii), even if we accept employers' claims that they were paying what they could, there is an obvious remedy without having to dismiss their servants. The reduction of hours for the same wages would have the immediate effect of increasing the pro-rata rates of

wages without employers having to increase their payments. Brenda 1-(i) utilised a similar strategy, but in a reverse format. She doubled the hours of Jessie 1- (ii) for the same pay, which immediately reduced the pro-rata rate of wages. In effect, employers in demanding complete autonomy in wage setting are using the threat of dismissal as a vehicle to safeguard their exploitative practices.

Irrespective of the contradictory elements of employers' rationale for threatening dismissals, they have to be taken seriously. The South African Government's dilemma is, if they enforce a minimum wage in this sector this could result in increased unemployment within the black community. Particularly, in the Eastern Cape, where unemployment as of 1996 was already running at 48.5%, to add to the numbers could be catastrophic. In the short term, social deprivation could dramatically increase. Understandably, the decision to proceed is not being taken lightly. The moral voice insists that implementation is urgently needed to counter exploitative practices of employers. The instrumental voice must advocate caution and take into account the dire poverty that could ensue in the short term for domestic workers. I am swayed towards the first option, but with provisos. Firstly, there should be a comprehensive survey of wages paid in the sector within the regions in order to quantify the percentage of employers who are paying below the proposed minimum. Secondly, welfare provisions should be in place in order to offset the loss of employment if this is the outcome. Either the state or employers should offer compensatory payments. Thirdly, employers should be strongly encouraged to reduce the hours of their servants rather than terminate employment in order to meet legal requirements. Long term there has to be the continuation of economic strategies for job creation in order to reduce the large pools of unskilled labour. In addition, educative programmes also need to be kept as a high priority, in order to train the

unskilled, which in turn will enable them to become more attractive to employers in the labour markets.

(ii) Social practices in the domestic service context:

What was marked in the interviews with the domestic workers was their implicit trust in their employers. All with the exception of Esther 8-(ii) believed that their employers were 'doing their best' in the wages that were paid to them. Esther's wages were comparatively higher than the others, (with the exception of Florence 9-(ii)), but believed that Sophie 8-(i) was underpaying her. The significant difference was that Esther said that she was treated badly by her employer. Therefore, the personal relationship between the parties in the domestic relationship must be viewed as significant in obscuring the reality of their exploitation. For example, the most extreme difference in standards of respective homes was between Theresa 7-(i) and Martha 7-(ii). However, Martha believed that her employer was paying her the wages she could afford and exhibited stoicism in enduring the deprivations brought about by her limited finances. Her employer, like the majority of the others, was described as a 'good' and 'kind' woman. This cited example is validation of Anderson's (2000) assertion of the kindness and power dynamic, where the servant becomes more beholden and vulnerable to the dictates of her employer, because of the kindly manner and actions of the employer. Sophie, in revealing the extent of her naked power, evoked resistance in Esther. The other employers through the medium of kindness enhanced their power over their servants. The benefits in kind dispensed were fundamental to maintaining a sense of 'beholding' in the employees, which in turn ensured acquiescence and compliance to employers' demands.

The question to be asked is why was kindness so effective as an instrument of power. How was it possible for it to be used simultaneously to promote a sense of personal intimacy but at the same time maximise social distance? The term 'Madam is my friend' encapsulates this contradiction. Why did free access to food translate into waiting for permission before taking any? Also, why had Jane's 6-(ii) empowerment through education resulted in her powerlessness? The factors that make up the answers will be complex and varied. I did not explore the personal histories of the domestic servants and their employers in sufficient detail to gain comprehensive understanding. Nonetheless, some answers were uncovered through the in-depth interviews. One of the answers can be found in the 'othering' in the domestic service relationship. As I have argued, the income differential, accentuated by racial differences, between the women is the breeding ground for these ideologies of difference to flourish. The power of the employer produced from this inequality is not only realised within the racial framework. Similar patterns of behaviour towards servants were manifest in the class relationship. For example, Theresa 7- (i) claimed that her ethnicity had been a unifying force in her relationship with Martha 7-(ii). As both had experienced the indignities of racial prejudices, Theresa believed that their common experiences had drawn them close together. However, Martha still addressed her as 'Madam' and described her as a mother figure, even though Theresa was the younger woman in the relationship. A factor in Jessie's 1-(i) reluctance to open a tea packet without explicit permission was that she implicitly was acknowledging her inequality, that is, she was 'the other' to Brenda 1-(i). Jane 6-(ii) had assumed that her education would be sufficient for her to step out of being 'the other' to becoming the 'daughter of the house'. She had learnt through her futile attempts that this was not achievable. Her pathos was that she rejected her 'othering' but was 'trapped' into the role against her wishes. In her words, her education was

‘destroying’ her, because instead of being a liberator it had been the mirror for her to see the reality of her life. For any of the domestic workers to challenge their employers would have a deeper significance than simply addressing their immediate concerns. Symbolically they would also be resisting their positioning as ‘the other’ in the relationship.

What these domestic workers failed to realise was that their social deprivations were not exclusively the outcome of the wider social injustices. Employers’ assertions of paying what they could in reality translated to taking advantage of the excess labour supply to pay minimal wages. It must not be forgotten that in these case studies these were predominantly exclusive female relationships, and as such the domestic workers’ vulnerability is exploitable in specific female terms. Motherlessness and mothering become interwoven in intricate patterns of dependency and need. Like Cock’s interviewees many of these domestic workers were left for protracted hours as children, whilst their mothers went to work as domestics. Rebecca’s 2-(ii) poignant remark that her employer taught her how to cook, as her mother was not there to show her as a child, is revealing. Esther 8-(ii) disliked her job but loved her employer’s children. She was denied the time to mother her own child and nurtured these children instead. Equally, employers were also emotionally interlinked to their servants. Brenda 1-(i) had a black nanny as a child and may be in her perseverance to find a ‘suitable’ servant was also a quest for a black mother. Natalie 2-(i) was lonely and frightened, whilst Gail’s 3-(i) livelihood was maintained through her workers. Significantly, Lidelwa 9-(i) had an instrumental attitude to employing a servant. For example, after her intended move to Cape Town she was only planning to employ a domestic for one day a week to ‘help out’. During her formative years, her mother had been there for her and she in turn had been at home when her children had been

younger. The outcome was that Lidelwa was not emotionally dependent on Florence 9-(ii). The other employers hid their own emotional needs of their employees by emphasising the dependency of their servants.

The fieldwork analysis has explored the social distancing that results from benefits in kind. Here is another aspect of their purposes to consider. As previously stated, wages are 'earned', benefits in kind are 'given' and as such are a visible demonstration of employers' superiority. Therefore, they also serve as a mask to stop the exposure of employers' own dependency and need. Your reliance on me substantiates my supremacy to you. To acknowledge my need of you would mean I would become your 'other'. In Hegelian terms, I realise my self through you, I gaze at you and through your eyes see myself. Your gaze cannot see my dependency because if doing so I am diminished. It is important to note that employers, irrespective of race, class or creed, provided anecdotal evidence of their employees' reliance on them, and none of their own. The nearest to tacit admittance of dependence was the stress on servants' 'usefulness' but always followed by the assertion that they were not indispensable. Their usefulness was expressed in terms of 'the freedom' their work gave the employer to do more 'important' things. Usefulness was never as an emotional support. She may be given the role of confidante and listener on occasions but this was in a passive capacity as always she returned to her employment role as worker. Applying Kristeva's conception, in the domestic work of my servant I leave the part of myself that I am rejecting, and this ultimately circumscribes the intimacy of the relationship.

Familial ideology was another powerful means of disguising the employers' own dependency. Cock did not consider these types of implications in her analysis. She

did note that paternalism was pervasive in the domestic service context, and that significant depersonalisation of servants occurred. For example, she refers to Memmi's reference of 'anonymous collectivity' to describe these types of practices she discovered in her fieldwork (Cock 1989/1979: 117). Although acknowledging the two phenomena she does not make the explicit link between the positioning of the child in the relationship and the necessary depersonalisation that is required to achieve this. I would argue that one is not possible without the other, and that there is a synergistic dynamic between the two, which perpetuates and magnifies the childlike status and depersonalisation of the domestic worker. To clarify the point, to become the child in the relationship, I am stripped of my adult status, I also lose my individuality as I am designated as having the similar characteristics of a child. However, the common ground of our studies was the fact that familial ideology was circumscribing the terms of the domestic service relationship in both. The difference between our respective findings was that I discovered there had been a shift in the terrain of the ideology. As discussed in the Introduction, it had become an exclusive female site. Hence, I concluded that paternalism was not an appropriate terminology and defined my findings as 'pseudo-maternalistic'. Kindly acts were a predominant feature of the relationship between the women, which in turn ensured the emotional bonding and compliance of the domestic work as it simultaneously hid the employers' emotional needs in the relationship.

It was difficult to ascertain if there was any collusion on the part of the domestic workers in situating themselves in the role of the child. In cases such as Jessie's 1-(ii) I concluded that she was an active participant in becoming the child for her employer. Transaction Analysis (TA) was applied in order to gain additional insights into why and how this occurred. An important point to stress was the fact that many of these

women were isolated and lonely. Even the domestic workers who had partners had the major responsibility of providing for the needs of all the family members. In the majority of cases, the wages from the employer was the only means of avoiding complete destitution. It is therefore understandable why some were susceptible to the persuasive practices of familial ideology. Another reason for taking on the role of the child was that domestic workers implicitly understood that it was a requirement of their embodied labour. For example, to be deferential, respectful, obedient and grateful were the means to ensure job security. It was interesting to note that Irene 4-(ii) situated herself as a 'child' when she came to work for the domestic service agency. It was her acknowledgement that she was more dependent and reliant on Helen 4-(i) than before. The domestic agency workers collectively had realised the incongruity of the familial ideology and in describing Helen as 'Mummy' rather than 'Madam' was affirmation of this fact. Nonetheless, they had recognised the instrumental necessity of assuming the role of children in their employment. Again, TA was applied to add additional insights as to how these women donned the persona of children in order to achieve their adult ends.

The servants' embodied labour was also another means to disguise their employers' emotional interdependence. Deference may in some instances be a mask to hide disdain, as in the case of Esther 8-(ii), but also obscures the employer's dependency needs. The unanswered question is would employers have been so kind if their maids had not conformed to their specific requirements? Older women were desirable as domestics, because they knew their place, did not answer back and never questioned instructions. This brings on to the agenda the notion that kindness is extracted from the employer in response to the servant's acceptable behaviour. Katrina 5-(i) was exemplary in her treatment of her servant, but Zenith 5-(ii) never presumed on that

relationship and was respectful in her dealings with her employer. For example, when she was ‘told off’ she never ‘sulked’ or defended herself to her employer. Rebecca 2-(ii) was told by Natalie 2-(i) to leave her problems ‘outside the door’ when she came to work. Implicitly, Rebecca was being rebuked for not conforming to acceptable behaviour. None of the domestic workers, with the exception of Florence 9-(ii), criticised the work tasks they had to do. This can be interpreted that they implicitly understood that the manner in which they performed their duties was an integral component of their execution. Interestingly, Jane 6-(ii) after achieving her teaching diploma saw herself as ‘better’ than a domestic worker. She did not criticise or complain about the jobs she had to do, but Claire 6-(i) found her to be a ‘burden’ and through choice would not employ her at all. However, Jane’s dependency was such that Claire could not extract herself from the relationship. Therefore, Claire’s kindness was not extracted through acceptable behaviour, but rather through Jane situating herself as the child in the relationship.

Irrespective of the factors that result in kindness predominating in the domestic service relationship, the outcome is that the employer’s ascendancy is maintained and her power to dictate terms is unassailable. This is because her power becomes hidden and the domestic worker perceives her oppressor as the wider societal forces. To clarify the point, employers were perceived by their employees as being impotent to increase their pay because outside societal forces constrained employers from paying more. To return to Esther’s 8-(ii) example, she was impotent to challenge Sophie 8-(i) but was silently resisting although her wages in relative terms to the other domestic workers were higher. Sophie’s more naked abuse than other employers, had evoked in Esther the question of whether wider societal factors were solely responsible for her exploitation. I have argued that in disregarding employers as ‘agents’ of power this

diffuses the workers' efficacy in challenging their practices. If we add my 'chains of otherness' conception, these workers recognise and are influenced by the wider entrapping societal forces such as illiteracy, unemployment and lack of alternative job opportunities, but assume that their employers are also similarly effected by wider restrictions. For example, their acceptance that employers paid what they could, even though their homes and standard of living was vastly superior to their own. I am mindful of the Johannesburg employer who cut off the price tags of her clothes before she brought them home, because one suit was half her domestic's monthly wage. In hiding this knowledge from her servant, she was maintaining the illusion that she was paying what she could. This subterfuge on her part perhaps was motivated to a certain extent by her fear that if her domestic worker saw the price of her clothes in relation to wages paid that she would realise that she was being exploited. The 'chains of otherness' become exposed to her view and the employer's culpability in forging the links revealed. The kindly manner of the employer is no longer sufficient to obscure the reality of her exploitative actions.

Newby (1979) noted a similar phenomenon with the farm workers that he interviewed. Although they asserted that their wages were inadequate, it was 'the system' rather than their individual employers that they held responsible. The inevitable outcome then and now is that the oppressor is both faceless and ubiquitous. Within this labyrinth of power structures, the employer's active participation is hidden from view. As stated in the Literature Review, in Foucauldian terms there are 'multiplicities of powers' and the strategy of resistance comes through collective action at a localised level ((Sheridan, 1994: 139). The collective together can become in themselves agents of power and begin the process of empowerment. I witnessed this in its embryonic form in the domestic agency workers. As discussed in the

Political Economy chapter they were ‘enjoying’ the experience of working together, were formulating strategies to outwit their male partners and were questioning their living standards. The acceptance of Foucault’s definition of power is not the issue, but rather his strategies for resistance – they are persuasive. To reaffirm the point from the previous section, a collective body for these domestic workers whether this be a formalised trade union or a meeting group is imperative if they are to realise and challenge their positions as marginalised workers. The final section of this chapter will consider empowerment as a means to improve the lives of domestic workers. Undoubtedly a collective forum is the platform from which these types of women can become ‘agents’ of resistance, and perhaps be able to cease to be positioned as the child in their relationships with their employers.

(iii) Culture of poverty?

As I was considering the improvements in the lives of domestic workers since the ending of apartheid, an important question to be asked was, had these women hindered the amelioration of their conditions by their own actions? Having discovered active participation in their familial positioning, were they also perpetuating their own life style patterns that would condemn them from generation to generation? Many of the women’s own mothers had been domestics, who had also assumed responsibility for providing for their families. It appeared to me that poverty had become habituated and was another decisive factor in their compliance and acquiescence in the domestic service relationship. Oscar Lewis’s controversial conception of the ‘culture of poverty’ (1959) became extremely alluring as a possible explanation to this life style patterning¹¹. For example, he writes,

¹¹ This conception is undoubtedly dated, but still has relevance in that it can only be measured through a protracted time period.

People with a culture of poverty are provincial and locally orientated [...] they know only their own troubles, their local conditions, their own neighbourhood [...] usually they do not have the knowledge, the vision, or the ideology to see the similarities between their problems and those of their counterparts elsewhere [...] they are not class conscious [...] (Lewis, 1967: xlviii).

In summary of the argument, Valentine (1968: 115) suggests that Lewis perceives the 'culture of poverty' as providing human beings with a design for living. A 'culture of poverty' would seem to provide some explanation for the habituation I observed.

Cohen (R., 2000: 280) highlights the similarities to Lewis's culture of poverty conceptualisation in Auletta's 1982 *The Underclass*. Auletta's notion of the black 'underclass' in the USA suggests that this social group have an internalised code of conduct. For example, apathy towards self-improvement, a lack of work ethic, and women as the primary, if not sole providers, for numerous off-spring. All of which is consistent with Lewis's claim of 'life patterning' within these lower social strata. Cohen cites Wilson (1978, 1987) as also raising the issue of the poor having similar life-styles. For example, 'the increasing number of families headed by low-earning or non-earning females, the rising number on welfare [...]'. Wilson was not specifically supporting Lewis's 'culture of poverty' thesis, but rather was seeking to prove that the black community in America 'had become bifurcated along class lines' rather than those of race (Cohen, R., 2000: 281). However, what is important for my purposes is the fact that resonances of Lewis's theorising are still relevant to the analysis of poverty. This I believe gives added weight to the application of Lewis's conceptualisation of poverty to my own analysis.

As my own research was not ethnographic, it was not sufficient in length or depth to make the claim of a 'culture of poverty' independently of research such as Lewis's, and subsequently Auletta's and Wilson's. Validation of this type of conceptualisation

has to be considered before I could justify its utilisation in my own research findings. Valentine seriously challenges Lewis in both his methodology and his analysis of the 'culture of poverty'. For example, as the focus of Lewis's research was the family, Valentine finds it unsustainable for Lewis to then theorise in respect of society as a whole. Family life studies do not provide sufficient evidence of life beyond the confines of the household (Valentine, 1968: 63). In my own research, I specifically addressed wider societal issues, such as hopes and aspirations for the future, the racial distance between the black and white communities, and whether or not life had improved for the women since the removal of apartheid. All the women had definite opinions on the questions being asked, and clearly had the ability to look beyond their own immediate circumstances¹². This ability to look beyond the immediate is at variance with Lewis's conceptualisation. It is important to note that Lewis himself did not explore wider societal issues in his studies of family life. For example, Valentine argues that there were indicators from the female Rios family members, (this was the family Lewis studied in *La Vida*), that they were aware of events and happenings beyond their immediate experiences (Valentine, 1968: 63). Lewis did not extrapolate this information and did not incorporate these indicators into his formulation of a 'culture of poverty'. I have to conclude that not only did I see evidence of wider social awareness, but also that Lewis himself neglected similar indicators in his own research. Therefore, Lewis is not convincing in his assertions that the outcome of the poverty culture is ignorance of external factors beyond the immediate experience.

¹² These questions were replicated from Cock's 1979 survey questions. Her findings also showed that women had the ability to look beyond their immediate circumstances. The majority of her respondents was hoping for an improvement in their living standards and wanted career opportunities for their children.

In respect of Lewis's analysis Valentine asserts that many of the features described as internalised cultural creations are in reality reactions to externally imposed conditions (Valentine, 1968: 115). This criticism is equally valid when considering Auletta's and Wilson's 'underclass' conceptualisations. Lewis's conceptualisation of a 'design for living' in Valentine's opinion is extremely questionable, and he writes, 'It seems fair to suggest that this is just what we should expect from ordinary people anywhere [...] (Valentine, 1968: 60). Implicitly Valentine has brought on to the agenda the debate between determinism and voluntarism, that is, the long-standing tension between structural and interpretive theoretical analysis. Valentine's position favours determinism whereas Lewis's and perhaps Auletta's would seem to favour voluntarism. The explanation of habituation from these respective perspectives is either a response to overwhelming perpetual poverty, or the social actor, the domestic, choosing a life style that is handed down from generation to generation. This debate is far more than competing theoretical constructs, because with it is the unspoken question of whether the poor have the ability to change their individual circumstances. If we accept Lewis's and Auletta's analysis then to a certain extent, they clearly do, as there is an intimation of individual choice in their assessment. On the other hand, Valentine's position would seem to imply that the hopelessness of the circumstances results in impotency to leave the poverty trap. Although not wishing to add in any detail Giddens's structuration perspective to the discussion, his notion of a combination of the structural and interpretive positions holds some credence. He states, 'We have to grasp what I would call the double involvement of individuals and institutions: we create society at the same time as we are created by it' (Giddens, 1986: 11). From this type of theorising, we can conclude that habituation is both externally imposed and internally reproduced.

Valentine having placed the issue of the significance of external conditions on to the agenda, does move his position to suggest the need to draw together the external factors and internal imperatives together.

[...] to conclude that the two formulations are both valid but not mutually conclusive – that the two causal sequences may be co-existent and perhaps mutually reinforcing – is a position that may ultimately prove well founded (Valentine, 1968: 117).

In a sense, Valentine is an early forerunner to Giddens structuration perspective in that in his final analysis of poverty he recognises that both determinism and voluntarism are both integral components of the condition. Giddens himself explicitly recognises a similar outcome in Paul Willis's (1997) *Learning to Labour*. Giddens makes the claim that Willis's research is an example of structuration as the school boys Willis investigated are destined to enter the labour market as unskilled manual workers not only because of the system, but also because of their active participation in the process. Valentine, Giddens and Willis are therefore all aware of the duality of the system and the actions of social actors. Having sought to apply Lewis's 'culture of poverty' and Auletta's and Wilson's 'underclass' conceptions I now have to reject them. In my research, particularly with the four domestic workers in the agency, I witnessed evidence that habituation was to a certain extent externally imposed and internally reproduced. Therefore, Valentine's early conclusions, and Giddens and Willis's more recent analysis, are far more appropriate to explain my research findings.

Cock's 1979 research had indicated that education of their children was a high priority for domestic workers. In many cases, the women made significant sacrifices in order to send money home for their children's educational fees. None of her respondents had a desire for their daughters to become domestic workers, but also recognised that

some might have to because of the lack of employment opportunities. Twenty years on, in my research, I found similar sentiments in many of the domestics I interviewed. My interviewees were still keen to educate their children and desired something better than domestic work for their daughters. What is significant is, not how successful the women had been in achieving their aims for their children, but rather that these hopes and aspirations were still vibrant despite years of struggle. This is not to say that none of the women had realised their expectations for their children. I spoke to one domestic whose son was now in the process of training to be an attorney and a daughter who was now a teacher. Indeed, if there were not some success stories there would be little impetus for these workers to pursue such objectives. In a sense it would be like having a lottery without a winner, there has to be the occasional success story for the participants to keep trying. In meeting with Professor Belinda Bozzoli in May 2000, she made an observation regarding some of the older domestic workers I had interviewed. I had interviewed women who were now supporting their grandchildren as their children have now left the area. I had concluded that their 'outcome' was a cyclical one in that these women were still after all these years working to provide a better future for their families. Professor Bozzoli suggested that there is another assessment of the situation. Could it not be argued that as their children have gone searching for work outside the area that they have fulfilled their mother's hopes and aspirations? Whether or not they were successful in their endeavour is not the point. The very act of embarking on the venture is demonstration of them seeking more than what their mothers had in their life.

The success or failure of children and grandchildren of domestic servants to 'better' themselves is not however the real issues. The important point is the fact that the domestic workers resignation and acceptance was for themselves not their children or

grandchildren. The impotence to change personal circumstances does result in some internalised habituation. However, the key word is personal, as although the domestic workers interviewed exhibited stoicism and endurance in their living conditions, they clearly were making efforts to offer something more to their children. In my initial assessment, I had assumed habituation because I only considered the outcomes. For example, their mothers had been domestics so they were too. The life-style was habituated because it was being replicated through the generations. What I had failed to grasp was that habituation was a personal response to extreme poverty, but that the internal resignation and acceptance was only for now and not for tomorrow. The fact that their tomorrow could only be realised through their children does not detract from the fact that these women were working towards a better future. The tragedy is that the women in focusing their hopes and aspirations on the future for their children compounds and perpetuates their acceptance and resignation to their own circumstances.

Perhaps in the final analysis it is an easy option to apportion blame to the poor for their deprivation. The responsibility is shifted from those with economic means to make a difference, to the poor themselves, who had not the resources to lift themselves out of the poverty trap. The low wages of the domestic workers I interviewed were a major contributing factor in their hardships. As children, many had sacrificed their own education to tend their siblings whilst their mothers went out to work as domestics. In turn, their own children are often left with extended family so that they too can work as a servant. In some cases, daughters were replacing their mothers in the same job, e.g. Rebecca 2-(ii) and Florence 9-(ii). The irony was beyond Rebecca, when she related how pleased she was that Natalie 2-(i) had taught her to cook, as her own mother had not been there to do so. Rebecca had failed to

realise that the reason her mother had not been there was because when her mother was Natalie's domestic, the hours she had worked were so long, that there had been no time to spend with her children. Natalie had been the means to deprive her of vital nurturing and bonding time with her mother. The fact that the results of poverty are accepted in their lives cannot be assumed the same as acceptance of responsibility for that poverty. Rebecca's life experiences, as were many of the others, were determined by external factors beyond her control. To accept and continue on is no more than a coping strategy with life circumstances that at times must feel too heavy to endure. As we move to the final section, I will explore the nuances of empowerment. However, without doubt the supreme vehicles to empower would be the employer's adherence to their legal duties and the paying of considerably higher wages. Of all the case studies, it was only Florence 9-(ii) who came close to having an adult relationship with her employer. She was not beholden, as she earned her wages and was not desperately dependent for any handouts that Lidelwa 9-(ii) felt inclined to give. However, with such personal tragedy in her family produced by the murder of her young sister, her life experiences were bringing other burdens.

(iv) Strategies of empowerment:

In this section, I do not propose to focus on the obvious methods of empowerment, such as wages and affiliations to organised bodies. The importance of such has already been raised and discussed. Rather I wish to concentrate on the more insidious practices that are persisting within the domestic service context. As stated in my discussion of the contradictory phrase, 'Madam is my friend' the longevity and commonality usage of such words as 'Madam' has resulted in its symbolic meaning becoming routinised. To repeat my remarks from the Literature Review, many of the social practices of domestic service predate apartheid and their implications have

ceased to be recognised as racial or class driven. I doubt if the recent labour legislation will make inroads into these types of legacies. For example, the Employment Equity Act 1998 and Equality Act 2000 are promoting positive discrimination in order to address black inequality in the workplace. A major aim is to remove the white hierarchies in employment structures. Although the Equity Act has been placed as second in importance after the constitution, the empowering of marginalised domestic workers is not part of its main agenda. These Acts will have even less impact than BCEA and LRA. A common feature of my interviews with employers was their assertions that they were not exhibiting class or racial prejudices in the treatment with their servants. It is one such incident that I wish to examine in detail here, and discuss how empowerment could be achieved in the relationship between employer and servant.

I refer to the purchase of a microwave, which one of Helen's 4-(i) agency workers was desirous of acquiring. She had not the money and had asked Helen for a 'loan' in order to buy it. In discussing with me why she wanted it, her rationale was convincing and logical. She stated that working long hours meant that when eventually she arrived home starting to cook then meant that it was late when the family got to eat. In addition, she was often tired and having a microwave would speed up the meal preparation process. She had seen a second hand one that she liked, but she felt that if she waited to save up the money it would have been gone by the time she had sufficient funds. She thought asking Helen for a loan was her best option. She was a reliable worker and Helen knew that she would pay the money back quickly. Her family and friends were 'poor' and could not lend her 'anything'. As stated elsewhere, the domestic agency workers collectively as a group had began to realise the incongruities of their situations. The terminology 'mummy' to describe

their relationship with Helen was indicative that the child role in the domestic service relationship was an instrumental decision rather than one that they accepted unequivocally. In a sense they had recognised their dependence but at the same time were reaffirming their status as women rather than that of children. Before agreeing to the purchase Helen had gone to inspect the microwave, and after seeing it had decided it was not worthy of purchase. She then refused the advance but was concerned that her domestic worker (Trudy) would somehow find the funds from elsewhere and buy it.

Helen had been vehement in her interview with me, that she abhorred racial practices and believed in equality for all irrespective of skin colour. Her taking time to go with Trudy to inspect the microwave was cited by her as an example of her intimacy with her workers and how much she cared for them. Indeed, she may well have been quite correct in her assessment that the microwave was defective and not worth the price being asked. Helen also may well have been correct in her view that the financial circumstances of Trudy were such that she could ill-afford such purchases. The point is however, whether Helen had the right to make these types of decisions on Trudy's behalf. Trudy at the time of this incident was fifty-two years of age. She had the sole responsibility of providing for her family and had worked to do so from the age of sixteen. What has to be asked is does she, and the other domestic workers, have the right to self-determination, and if so does this include the right to fail or make incorrect decisions? Agency does not come with provisions, because if it does it no longer exists. For example, you can determine your own course of action as long as it meets with my approval. If this is the case, my freedom of choice is removed. Helen clearly had the right to decide whether to advance the money or not, it was her money. Yet, to be involved in deciding what that money should or should not buy is another

example of pervasive ‘pseudo- maternalistic practices’. The outcome is that this worker was again stripped of her adult status and in the process is depersonalised and demeaned.

Three questions need to be asked. Firstly was the advice solicited or asked for by Trudy? Secondly, was Helen invited to check the merchandise or did she invite herself? Finally, did Helen exclusively make the assessment that the microwave was defective or did Trudy have input? The line between friendship and ‘pseudo-maternalism’ is not always clearly defined. If Trudy had invited Helen to go with her, had sought her opinion, maybe we could argue that this is no more than an act of friendship. From what I was told I do not believe this was the case, but just suppose that it was. A friend who is asked for advice would give it but would not presume to make the final decision. This example gives credence to my assertion of the negative outcomes of dispensing benefits in kind rather than increasing wages. Again these types of payments remove choice, the workers have what the employer decides rather than what they decide for themselves. The cornerstone of empowerment has to be the right to choose for themselves. Domestic workers are already restricted in available choices because of their lack of financial means. These types of actions by employers only diminish their capacity to choose even further. Paradoxically these acts of kindness alleviate deprivation but at the same time erode the status of domestic workers as self-determining adults. To repeat the recurring theme, higher wages rather than reliance on benefits in kind reduces poverty but maintains the dignity of these workers.

I had a meeting with the wife of a prominent administrator at Rhodes University. She informed me that her and her husband had employed two domestics for many years. Through the years there had been money set aside for their retirement. I was told,

‘We gave them a choice, they could either have the money in a lump sum or we would purchase a small retirement home for them. If they wanted to blow the money it was entirely up to them, it was their money not ours.’ (Both of the servants opted for retirement homes). As I spoke to this woman, I realised that principles sometimes come with a price. It is far easier to treat people, as you perceive they are, than to treat them, as they ought to be. People irrespective of their capabilities have the right to independent choice. It is not enough to assert that the choices being made are foolish, ill advised or foolhardy, and then remove them. It is an inescapable fact that an integral part of personal development is based on learning from our own mistakes. Empowerment has to have incorporated within it the right to fail, without this, growth of individuals is seriously impeded. Yet, by assessing failure are we not exhibiting our own ethnocentricity? The benchmark for failure is our criteria, our standards, and our judgements. Perhaps we need to substitute the word difference for that of failure. The empowerment of the black community has to have incorporated within it the right to be different.

It should not be forgotten that Helen had neither medical care nor pension provision. Equally, Gail 3-(i) had no funds set aside for her retirement and was committed to running the farm indefinitely. Could it not be argued that this is an example of their own poor financial management, and as such are they qualified to instruct others how to manage their financial affairs? Undoubtedly, Helen and Gail would defend their position by stating that their lack of provision was due to economic circumstances beyond their control. It is not a question of personal incompetence but rather that they cannot afford the financial outlay. Helen had justified her actions in blocking the microwave purchase by stating that black people were gullible, irresponsible with money and easy prey for unscrupulous dealers. Why are they not granted the same

privilege of others recognising their economic deprivations? Grahamstown's black population has chronic unemployment, and those who are able to find employment are paid extremely low wages. The situation of dire poverty will have significant detrimental effects on the financial circumstances of those experiencing it irrespective of their personal qualities. Helen's assumptions and generalisations in respect of the black peoples' personal characteristics in dealing with financial matters is evidence of a perception of ideological racial superiority. Helen had therefore not completely bridged the racial distance between white and black. Working alongside her black workers demonstrated her conscious commitment to combat racism, as she perceives it. Ideological superiority is far subtler, close physical proximity does not necessarily alter racial perceptions, particularly those that are premised on character deficiencies.

What I am suggesting is that there is a stepwise process in overcoming racial and class practices, which must be achieved before empowerment can begin. The first is recognition of racial premises and practices, which then must be followed by a self-examination of one's own actions. We all have to ask is there a dichotomy in what I practice to what I preach. A simple way forward is to treat people how they ought to be treated rather than our perception of what they are or are capable of. There also needs to be an understanding that growth comes by having the means and the freedom to make independent choices. To reiterate the point, when choice is removed there is a curtailment of self-development. In an interview with a coloured employer, she remarked that with the ending of apartheid she now had her 'dignity'. As a black nurse during the apartheid era she had not been allowed to touch white bodies, which more than any other apartheid practice had made her feel devalued as a human being. This has now gone, and her 'dignity' is her most prized possession. We cannot

legislate to give dignity, self-esteem or worth, this is only realised in the way that we treat one another. Theresa 7-(i) had begun the process of questioning her relationship with Martha 7-(ii) after reading a thought provoking article on domestic service. This type of awareness is the only the beginning. In the new South Africa the underpinning question that needs to be asked is am I safeguarding, promoting human dignity by what I say and do? The 'other' ceases to be designated as such by me, because I am now not realising myself through my relationship of power with you. I now ask are you realising yourself through my treatment of you.

Final remarks:

Nelson Mandela's (1994) book entitlement *Long Walk to Freedom* is an apt description of the improvements being achieved in the lives of domestic servants. Progress is slowly beginning but there is still much more to be done. The first section of the chapter in its examination of terms and conditions of employment utilised Cock's research as a starting point for my own findings. The introduction of inclusive protective labour legislation is an improvement for domestic workers in this sector. The difficulty has been effective implementation, which has been exacerbated by the disbanding of SADWU in 1996. In my meetings with the Department of Labour, Black Sash and the Gender Commission representatives I was shown pro-forma contracts that they had all produced as a guide for both employers and employees. These collective bodies were promoting and encouraging the meeting of the legal requirement for a written contract. Progress was slow as they were all working on an individual basis and were responding to enquiries rather than formulating a more comprehensive strategy to ensure compliance. If compliance is achieved and employers fulfil their legal duties as outlined in BCEA and LRA this would be a marked improvement in the lives of domestic workers. The example of Florence 9-

(ii) is a validation of this point. As the college met its legal requirements in its pay and conditions, the outcome for her was that they were superior to the other employment arrangements. Another improvement for the domestic workers in my case studies was the regulation of their hours of work, these were not as protracted as those in Cock's study. The encroachment of the townships to Grahamstown has resulted in more domestic workers not taking up residence with their employers. However, for those that still walked to work such as Martha 7-(ii) this still took considerable time, as in her case an hour each way. The accommodation of the domestic workers was still inadequate as all of the women I interviewed were without inside water. However, from their perspective, this is an improvement on apartheid. Then their access to water had been on a communal basis and their toilet wastes had been collected once a week.

The significant area that had not improved for the domestic workers in my case studies, with the exception of Florence 9-(ii) was in wages paid. These were still unacceptably low but the domestic workers, with the exception of Esther 8-(ii) did not recognise they were being exploited and accepted their employers' assertions that they were paying what they could. Benefits in kind, for the women in my case studies, were superior in quality and quantity to those given during apartheid, but had the negative outcome of increasing dependency of the domestic workers on their employers and encouraging the perpetuation of familial ideology. The second section of the chapter considered the social practices of the domestic service relationship. In this section, I added a different theoretical analysis to the examination of domestic service to that of Cock. Despite our differing theoretical approaches, there was some common ground between our respective studies. Cock discovered significant evidence of depersonalisation of domestic workers, which I also found in my case

studies. Familial ideology was pervasive, so too in mine. My addition of non-white employers into the assessment indicated that this type of ideology is not exclusive to racial differences. Class distance can result in parallel manifestations of 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices. It can be concluded that the outcome then and now was that the treatment of domestic workers in these specific areas has not improved.

The difference between our respective studies was in the terrain of the ideology. In my case studies, this had become an exclusive female preserve. Hence my terminology in the thesis to describe the familial ideology 'pseudo-maternalism' rather than paternalism. As a female site, my case studies revealed specific characteristics such as mothering and motherlessness being interwoven to colour the terms of the relationships. Emotional bonding was also high on the agenda, with the outcome that domestic workers had close personal relationships with their employers. In this aspect of my research, my findings mirrored Newby's 1979 findings. The exception to this was Esther 8-(ii). Cock (1989/1979: 15) indicated that many of her interviewees regarded themselves as 'slaves' in their occupations. This perception would have been a major obstacle to close emotional bonding. Therefore, it can be concluded that there has been a positive shift in the terms of intimacy between employers and their servants in my case studies. The negative outcome from this is that whereas domestic workers in Cock's study recognised their oppression and were prepared to criticise their work tasks and treatment, my interviewees were not. All of them with the exceptions of Esther 8-(ii) and Florence 9-(ii) justified their employers' actions and had implicit trust that they were doing their best.

The third and fourth sections of the chapter moved beyond the original remit of the research question. What I had not envisaged as I embarked on the research was that I

would witness habituation in the lives of the domestic workers I interviewed. To clarify the point, I noted similar life patterning to those discovered by Cock, such as isolation, fragmented family life, sole responsibility for family support, and the desire for their daughters not to become domestic servants. Twenty years on I heard similar sentiment, with women expressing the hope that their daughters would have the opportunities denied to them. In cases studies such as Rebecca's 2-(ii), Jane's 6-(ii) and Florence's 9-(ii) they were actually working for the same employers as their mothers. A new question came on the agenda, that is had domestic workers themselves been instrumental in condemning themselves through their own actions? In the third section of the chapter I used Lewis's 'culture of poverty' conception as a vehicle to seek the answers. These types of arguments are highly controversial, but still keep re-emerging within the examination of poverty (see R. Cohen, 2000 references to Auletta, 1982, Wilson, 1987). I rejected the conception as the answer to the habituation patterning. The extreme income differentials within South Africa, which were significant during apartheid have continued and are the decisive factor in the similar life-styles being repeated. As some of the interviewees remarked, political apartheid has been removed but economic apartheid continues. The life patterning was an inevitable outcome of pervasive poverty.

The final section of the chapter considered empowerment strategies. This was a logical progression from the third section, as if domestic workers were made powerless by economic factors beyond their control, what were the means available to empower them. Increased wages and trade union membership clearly are important in achieving this end. As the first two sections had addressed these issues, I decided in this final section to consider more subtle methods to achieve an increase of self-determination in the lives of domestic workers. I focused my arguments around the

notion of agency, that is, the right of choice. Perhaps one of the most insidious practices that apartheid produced was the serious infringement and curtailment of the freedom to choose. For example, the ultimate denial to many black people of the choice of living in the territory of South Africa if they so desired and the colour bar, in so many aspects of life, that removed their freedom of choice. Implicit in the remit of the research question was the suggestion that this pernicious political regime had defined both the terms and conditions and the social practices within the domestic service relationship. This is an over-simplistic notion. Many of the features of domestic service predate apartheid, and as the Comparative and Global Considerations chapter indicated, are common to many different cultural contexts. The outcome has been that the significance of the social practices has not been recognised by the participants in the relationship as they have become assimilated into the everyday fabric of South Africa. For example, paternalism and 'pseudo-maternalistic' practices from their longevity have become so routinised in the behaviour of employers that the racial and class implications are not only not acknowledged but not recognised. The microwave incident is illustrative of the point. In recognising the right of individuals to choose for themselves, this raises awareness of the implications of our actions towards others. If we can ask, is what I am doing interfering with or blocking the other person's right to self-determination, then we can begin the process of change in our own lives and the lives of those that we interrelate with.

What was impossible to measure were the feelings that the domestic workers now had since the ending of apartheid. Many did not expect anything for themselves, as they felt having lived through apartheid, they were now too old for its passing to change their lives. Yet, they had a brightness of hope for the future of South Africa and

believed that the next generations would have a better life than they. The word 'dignity' was used many times, and the women commented on such things as being able to decide which queue to use in the post office, to enter the Town Hall's main entrance and sit anywhere on the local bus. What also was truly remarkable was that these women expressed no bitterness or hatred towards whites for what they had endured. Each took on the responsibility of providing for their families and did not expect outside assistance in their self-appointed roles. In visiting many homes in the townships, I was moved by their hospitality and kindness. I was humbled by their stoicism and endurance against significant social deprivation and salute their example of hard work and personal sacrifice. It is a travesty that such exemplars of womanhood are still demeaned to that of child within their chosen occupations. It will take the South African Government's strategies on social inequalities and employers complying with labour legislation, that is inclusive of a minimum wage, for these women's adult status to be acknowledged and reaffirmed by themselves as well as others. Finally, I endorse the words of the closing remarks of the article in the Economist (2001) with the sincere hope that it was right in its assessment.

Fortunately, South Africa has shown that it can perform miracles. Whatever its shortcomings today his [Mbeki's] country is a far happier place than it used to be, and a far happier place than it might have been. In time, it may yet fulfil the promise of the Mandela years.

APPENDIX 1:***Interview Schedule re South African Domestic Service.***

As indicated in the methodology, the interviews were conducted via a semi-structured format with a range of closed and open questions. Some questions were kept closed, that is, yes/no answers were sufficient. For example, Question 7 for domestic workers ‘Do you eat the same food as the family?’ was kept as a closed question. Having a mix of closed and open questions was deliberately chosen in order to ensure that I was not seen as intimidating and kept the style of the interviews as conversational rather than formal. Also, many of the domestic workers were poorly educated and having a variety of open and closed questions meant that I could vary the emphasis depending on their understanding. To clarify the point, if an interviewee seemed confused I would return to the closed questions before introducing more open questions later in the interview.

Profile information re employer and servant:

Name? Age? Status? Race? Dependants? Work history, self, partner, parents, children? Occupational background? Length of domestic service employment? Work tasks? Educational background? Number of servants in household? Hours employed? Wages? Holiday arrangements? Contract of employment? Benefits in kind? Codes of behaviour articulated or assumed? Accommodation? I.e. live in or out? If in - what type of accommodation and facilities offered? If out - distance of home to work, and hours of travelling? One employer or multiple employers?

IDENTICAL QUESTIONS TO COCK’S WILL BE INDICATED BY AN *

Questions specific to domestic worker:

- (1) Why are you a domestic?
- (2) If you were not now a domestic, what other job would you like to do?
- (3) Do you think you will ever change your job?
- (4) Why do you think this?
- *(5) How old were you when you got your first job?
- *(6) How did you get this job?
- (7) Do you eat your meals with the family?
- (8) Do you eat the same food as the family?
- (9) Are your friends and family allowed to visit you whilst you are at work?
- (10) Can you use all the equipment in the home?
- (11) Who in the home tells you what work tasks you have to do?
- *(12) What are your feelings towards your employer(s)?
- (13) Now apartheid has gone do you still feel the same way about your employer?
- (14) Now apartheid has gone do you still feel the same way about your job?
- *(15) If there was one thing about your job you would change, what would it be?
- (16) Do you believe it will happen?
- (17) Why do you think this?
- (18) Did you expect more changes in your job than you have got now?
- (19) Why do you think changes are happening/not happening?
- *(20) What would you say is the best thing about your job?
- (21) Was this possible/ did you think this would have been possible under apartheid?
- *(22) What is the worst thing about your job?
- (23) Under apartheid was it worse/ imagine it was worse than it is now?
- (24) Why do you think this is?
- *(25) What do you think the feelings of your employer are towards you?

(26) Now apartheid is gone do you think her feelings toward you have changed at all. **(N.B. if servant only employed post – apartheid adapt the question to incorporate her expectations of employer/servant relationship).**

(27) Does she treat you differently than before?

(28) Did you expect her to do treat you better than before?

(29) Do you feel the way blacks and whites live are more similar now?

(30) Do you think there are more chances now for black women?

(31) Why do you think this is?

(32) Now the pass laws have gone have you had more choice of jobs you can do?

(33) Has your life got better now apartheid has gone?

(34) In what ways?

(35) Do you think chances for yourself and family has/will improve?

(36) Why did you think this?

(37) Are you hopeful/worried about the future?

Questions specific to employer:

*(1) Why do you employ a servant(s)?

(2) How did you choose your servant?

(3) Do you expect the employment arrangement to be long term?

(4) Do you always plan to employ servant(s)?

(5) Has the ending of apartheid made it more difficult to get servants?

(6) Why do you think this is?

(7) Have you had to alter pay and conditions to your servant(s)?

(8) What do you feel about the introduction of a minimum wage?

(9) How do you regard your domestic servant?

(10) Do you trust her in your home?

(11) Have you ever had any problems with your servant(s)?

(12) Do you have dealings with the rest of her family?

- (13) Do you think now apartheid has gone it has improved/worsened/ stayed the same your relationship with your servant(s)?
- (14) Why do you think this is?
- (15) Who is responsible for her supervision and instruction re work tasks?
- (16) What household tasks do you/partner/ children do?
- (17) Whose responsibility is it to run the home?
- *(18) How do you feel towards your servant(s)?
- (19) Do you feel the new political climate has influenced your feeling in any way?
- (20) Do you feel the new political climate has influenced your behaviour towards your servant(s)?
- *(21) What quality do you like best about your servant(s)?
- (22) Do you think you expect less/more/same now?
- (23) Why do you think your expectations or lack of them are as they are?
- *(24) What quality do you like least about your servant(s)?
- (25) Has this altered now?
- (26) Are you more tolerant/less tolerant/ the same?
- (27) Have you had to alter your behaviour towards your servant(s)?
- (28) Why do you think this is the case/not the case?
- *(29) What could be done to improve the situation of domestic servants?
- (30) Do you think it is already changing in this new political climate?
- (31) Do you think it needs to change?
- (32) Would you say it is changing too much/too little/ not at all?
- (33) Has your life style been effected in any way since apartheid's removal?
- (34) Did you expect it to change?
- (35) Do you think things will stay as they are now?
- (36) Why do you think this?
- (37) Are you optimistic/pessimistic about the future?

APPENDIX 2:**Observations of the townships near to Grahamstown.**

The homes in the townships were haphazard in that shanties, mud huts, detached mansions, standard built houses were intermingled one with another. The Local Authorities have pursued a policy of non-interference, which is a legacy of the apartheid era. The infrastructure was still extremely poor with dirt tracks predominating. Inside water has been introduced in a small percentage of the homes, but the majority still had a water tap in their back yards and an outside toilet. The supply of water to the townships was still an issue and to have a bathroom added to the home for many was an important aspiration. However, I was told by many of the interviewees that water arrangements had been vastly improved. During apartheid water had to be collected on a daily basis from the end of the street, and slop buckets were their only toilet facilities. A truck would come once a week to collect their toilet wastes. The smell in the locations, particularly in the summer could be overpowering and many felt that their health had been affected because of these unsanitary conditions.

Another legacy from apartheid was the absence of street names and numbers. In order to thwart the police from finding anyone, the community deliberately changed street names, numbers, and in some cases eradicated them all together. This has never been rectified. Consequently postal services to the townships were erratic and were dependent on personal knowledge of where individual families are residing. One positive thing I noted to my visits to the townships were the schools, which are being improved. One school I was taken to in Fingo was having inside toilets constructed. I also noted numerous Health Clinics throughout the locations. However, some of these were being organised and run by charitable organisations and not the

government. For example, I was given a guided tour of one run by Catholic nuns, the funds to run and maintain it coming from Europe.

The clinics, I was told, were always busy, as many residents wanted to avoid hospitals if they possibly could. Sister Bernadette who showed me round her clinic had come from Ireland over twenty years ago and has worked single handed for most of the time. Her remit was to deal with minor ailments, particularly cuts and bruises and persuade patients if it was more serious to go and see a doctor. On a weekly basis a doctor from the hospital would come and run a 'free surgery'. Any simple medicines the clinic dispensed were free. This was important to those who came to the clinic, as many of them living in poverty could not afford to pay for any medicines. Sister Bernadette had a twin sister, who although not a nun, was a devout Catholic and through various fund raising activities in Ireland kept the clinic in supplies.

An important point to remember is that the HIV-positive virus is endemic in Africa. As stated in the Political Economy chapter it is predicted that between 4-6mil South Africans will die of AIDS by 2010. The burdens on the state in health care payments are and will continue to be heavy. As such the need in the foreseeable future for these charitable enterprises will not dissipate. One can only speculate, but it would be surprising if Sister Bernadette's daily agenda will remain in the realm of minor ailments. She, and many like her, may have to shift their involvement to give assistance in caring for those with this life-taking disease. A feature of many of the relationships I observed between domestic servants and partners was the fact that they were transient ones. Men were visitors rather than permanent co-habitees. It is therefore likely that sexual activity, and the subsequent possibility of transmission of the HIV-positive virus, will remain high.

Another major social problem was the spiralling crime figures. These were for the most part contained within the townships, but white residents were uneasy because the distance between them and the once sacrosanct areas was quickly diminishing. The fear, according to many of the residents I spoke to, was that crime would increase alongside the townships' expansion. In areas near to the townships, I saw young black men hired to stand guard outside homes during the day whilst owners were at work. Grahamstown's home security features were not as overt as Port Alfred's (neighbouring town), but with proximity becoming a real issue they will undoubtedly be increased. Security firms are booming in South Africa, and *The Economist* (2001) states that turnover for such types of firms in 1999 was R11 bil.

The encroachment of the townships towards Grahamstown was not because the black community was barred from purchasing property in the town itself. The difficulty was that they could ill-afford the prices. The point was made to me that economic apartheid had replaced its political imposition. Real Estate prices in the town areas near the townships had been seriously eroded. As the townships expand this further compounds the situation, and in some instances, homes in these localities had become totally unsellable. For domestic servants there was a benefit to the townships' expansion, as the distance to their place of work was significantly reduced. Many of them had traditionally lived with their employers. This trend did appear to be altering. The majority of the domestic servants I interviewed had their own homes in the townships and travelled to and from their employer's home on a daily basis. The benefit for them was that they were no longer 'permanently available' to their employers. In addition, they were able to have more time with their own families, which has always been a contentious issue in this sector of employment.

APPENDIX 3:

Outlined below are the basic provisions of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

It is important to note that the Act only sets the minimum standards for employees. Employers are entitled to exceed these minimum requirements if they so wish. However, they cannot legally offer lower standards than the minimum set. Even if a formal agreement is in place between the employer and employee if this falls short of the minimum outlined in BCEA it is invalid. The Act also applies to any matter not formally agreed between the two parties. The implementation of the provisions is not rigid it does allow a certain flexibility, in that both employers and employees can vary or change them to individual circumstances.

Provisions of BCEA:

- * A written contract of employment between the employer and employee.

(As of 1994 this also applies to employers of domestic and farm workers).

- * Children under the age of 15 are prohibited from work.

- * Children between 15 – 18 will be more protected and prohibited from working in certain industrial sectors. For example, this age group cannot be employed in mining.

- * Provisions for establishing minimum wages for marginalised workers such as farm workers and domestics.

* Maximum hours for a working week 45 hours. Any additional hours above this figure must be paid at the overtime rate, or an employee can be given paid time off in lieu of overtime worked.

* Overtime premium increased from 'time and a third' to 'time and a half'.

* Compulsory rest periods. An entitlement of a meal break of 1 hour if the employee works continuously for 5 hours or more. This can be reduced to 30 minutes if mutually agreed by both parties. If required or permitted to work during this period remuneration must be paid. Workers must have Sunday as a rest day unless they agree otherwise. If regularly having to work on a Sunday the employee has to be paid 'time and a half'. The Act also recognises the special hazards faced by night workers. The hours of these workers is usually longer than day workers, and in recognition of this the Act states they must either have extra time off or have premium payments.

* Annual leave increased from 2 to 3 weeks per annum.

* Paid leave for Public Holidays. If the worker works on such days the remuneration should be double the normal pay or the normal pay plus payment for the number of hours worked on the public holiday, whichever is the greater of the two amounts.

Public Holidays – If the holiday falls on a Sunday the next day, Monday is the day to be taken off. Dates include; New Year's Day (January 1), Human Right's Day (March 21), Good Friday (date varies from year to year), Family Day (Monday after Good Friday), Freedom Day (April 27), Worker's Day (May 1), Youth Day (June 16), National Women's Day (August 9), Heritage Day (September 24), Day of

Reconciliation (December 16), Christmas Day (December 25). Day of Goodwill (December 26).

* Sick leave remains unaltered, that is, 3 weeks in a 3-year cycle. However, workers are now entitled to their full quota of sick leave after 6 months work rather than the previous 12 months.

* Maternity leave has now been extended from 12 weeks to 16 weeks and now includes leave for women who have had stillborn children. Women have more choice to the allocation of their leave. For example, a woman does not have to compulsory take 4 weeks off prior to her due date of birth.

* All women irrespective of how long they have been employed in a company are entitled to maternity leave. However, no employer is obliged to pay any of his/her female staff for the period not worked due to pregnancy.

* Introduction of new form of leave – family responsibility leave. Employees are now entitled to 3 days paid leave per year to attend the birth or illness of their children or death of an immediate family member.

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